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*Labor in Twentieth Century America*

Under the Editorship of  
Henry David, Harry J. Carman, Herbert J. Lahne  
Consultant Editor: John Chamberlain

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THE COTTON MILL WORKER

*Labor in Twentieth Century America books  
already published are:*

THE NEEDLE TRADES by Joel Seidman

THE PRINTING TRADES by Jacob Loft

THE COTTON MILL WORKER by Herbert J. Lahne

MEN AND COAL by McAlister Coleman

#### ERRATUM

p. 129, 5th line from bottom: *had* should read *head*

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*Labor in Twentieth Century America*

THE  
COTTON MILL  
WORKER

By

HERBERT J. LAHNE

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TO  
ESTHER



## EDITORS' FOREWORD

A DEFINITIVE history of the men and women who have worked for a living in the nation's major fields of production since the United States has been industrialized still remains to be written. The Labor in Twentieth Century America Series has been undertaken to facilitate the fulfillment of this task for the period of the present century.

By the close of the nineteenth century, the dominant patterns which American life has since assumed were already taking form. The labor movement, having shed its earlier middle-class reformist characteristics, had become primarily committed to the more limited but enormously important purpose of securing higher wages, shorter hours and better working conditions through economic means. This purpose and method still distinguish the American labor movement. But significant differences set off the scope, orientation, membership, financial resources, and relationship to government of organized labor today from that of the turn of the century.

American labor has been on the march in recent years. Its ultimate destination is still somewhat obscure, and the war—in the outcome of which labor has so much at stake—is critically affecting the speed and direction of its movement. Before the advent of world conflict, the impact of the depression and New Deal legislation contributed to the abandonment of outworn concepts and behavior patterns and the appearance of a new vitality in labor circles. In the last dozen years, organized labor has experienced its sharpest internal conflicts; the American Federation of Labor met its first full-scale challenge in the Congress of Industrial Organization; membership figures have skyrocketed to new heights; strongholds of anti-unionism have been breached; the principle of collective bargaining has been decisively recognized; and the right to organize has been effectively protected.

The story of those who constitute the labor force in industry cannot be told alone through the rise and fall of trade unions, developments in industrial relations and bitterly contested labor conflicts. Equally essential are an analysis of the industrial structure and of the composition of the workers; treatment of the conditions of labor, living standards, and opportunities for education and recreation; and

consideration of changing attitudes of behavior on the part of government and the public. These views conditioned the planning and contents of the Labor in Twentieth Century America Series.

In this volume the workers in America's oldest factory industry are the subject. Dr. Lahne's *The Cotton Mill Worker* analyzes in detail the composition of and changes in the industry's heterogeneous labor force—male and female, child and adult, immigrant and native. First-hand observation as well as thorough research lie behind the penetrating account of the conditions under which cotton mill workers in New England and the South have labored and lived. The presentation of the differences in industrial and labor conditions in these two regions is noteworthy. Dr. Lahne's treatment provides the basis for a full appreciation of the struggle to build a stable union structure during the twentieth century in the face of the fluctuating fortunes of the industry, competitive wage-cutting, paternalistic employer practices and internal antagonisms in the labor force itself. The bitter conflicts which have broken the surface calm of labor relations in the industry are dispassionately presented, and the recent developments in which the unions have achieved more than a small and temporary success in translating the cohesiveness of the strike into an established membership and written agreements are treated with rare balance and insight. *The Cotton Mill Worker* contributes substantially to the understanding of a significant aspect of American industrial and labor history.

THE EDITORS

June, 1944



## FOREWORD

THERE HAVE been many volumes on particular phases of cotton manufacturing, and many on specific areas and labor conflicts in the industry. No single volume, however, has devoted itself solely to telling the story of the cotton mill workers in the present century—the story of the immigrants who poured into the New England mills, of the individualistic Southern farmer who overnight found himself part of the factory machine, of the women and children who toiled to make the family ends meet, of hours and earnings, unemployment, and of the many attempts of the unions to take labor exploitation out of the competitive picture of the industry. It is this gap in the industry's annals that this volume hopes to fill.

The terms "cotton goods industry," "cotton manufactures," and "cotton textiles" are used interchangeably in this work. Owing to changes in census classifications, it has not been possible to assemble absolutely comparable data at all times, but whichever term is used, the scope of the volume has been held, as closely as the data permit, to the manufacture of cotton yarns and thread and of cotton woven goods over twelve inches in width. Within this definition, attention is focused foremost upon the New England states of Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, and the Southern states of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama. Though there are cotton mills in over twenty states, the ten states just mentioned have 90 per cent of the industry's wage earners—who are our primary concern. Similarly, the story of unionism in the cotton mills is mainly a history of the United Textile Workers, affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, and more recently, of this organization and the Textile Workers Union of America, affiliated with the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

In preparing this volume, the author has had the benefit of conversations with officials of the unions—A. F. of L., C. I. O., and unaffiliated—and with literally hundreds of cotton mill executives in the ten important cotton manufacturing states. The author is indebted to Professors Leo Wolman and Paul F. Brissenden of Columbia Uni-

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I am indebted to Hillman-Curl, Inc., for permission to quote from *Proletarian Journey* by Fred E. Beal, and to Robert R. R. Brooks for permission to utilize fully the excellent account of the 1934 general strike which appears in his unpublished doctoral dissertation, *The United Textile Workers of America*.

The excellent work of my typist, Miss Valerie Reich, made the work of preparing this volume for the press less onerous than it might have been. I gladly acknowledge the assistance and patience shown me by the other editors of this series. For the aid and encouragement of my wife, Esther, I am more than thankful.

H. J. L.

New York City  
January, 1944

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# THE COTTON MILL WORKER





THE STORY of the labor force in the New England cotton mills is, like the story of labor in many other American industries, a story of successive waves of immigration of workers from strange places abroad who came here first as a supplement to the existing native labor force and then became themselves the foundation upon which still another layer of newcomers later rested. In the period before the Civil War the skilled workers in the industry were mainly native-born, but they were aided by Scotch and English workers who had learned their trades in their homelands and fitted easily into the American picture. Among the unskilled and semiskilled, however, things were different. Spurred by the famine of 1848, the trickle of Irish, who had been coming into the mill regions for some time, mounted to a tidal wave. From the farms and cities of Ireland they came—men, women, and children, who braved the Atlantic to seek here a better livelihood than their poverty-stricken native soil afforded. For a time it seemed to the Protestant New Englander that the cotton mill villages of his region would soon be little more than adjuncts of Catholic Dublin—a prospect the former did not relish. The natives resented the influx and showed little of the tolerance for which this country is known, many of them moving out of the industry into what they considered more congenial fields. This was especially true of the daughters of the native American farmers in the region—the ladies who spent the winters working in the mill and the summers on the parental farm. By the time of the Civil War the Irish were the largest foreign group in the mills, but the next wave was on its way to oust them from this pinnacle. The Irish brogue was soon to lose out to French, the latter with a heavy admixture of English phrases and words converted to French pronunciation and grammar.

Starting shortly after the Civil War, the farms of the French Canadians in the eastern areas of Canada, within easy traveling range of the New England mills, supplied the workers which the mills sorely needed to meet the demands of our rapidly expanding economy.

Since they crossed no oceans and travelled no great distance to get to the mills, the French Canadians at first came only for winter work and then returned at planting time to their farms in Canada—indeed, they were soon dubbed the “Annual Canadians.” This was but a temporary phase, however, for the French Canadians soon settled down as a permanent part of the mill communities. To say “part” though is but a figure of speech, for they became almost the “all” of these communities. By the eighties they had definitely ousted the Irish from the leading position and, despite the slowdown in French Canadian immigration in the nineties, at the end of the century the French Canadians were still almost half the work force in the New England cotton mills.

In the eighties and nineties there began a scrambling of nationalities which made the previous picture seem simplicity itself. The mill owner who formerly dealt with native Americans, Scotch, English, Irish, and French Canadians, of which only the last did not have the English language as basic conversational equipment, now found himself confronted with Portuguese, Greeks, Poles, Italians, Turks, Armenians, Scandinavians, Germans, Hebrews, and Lithuanians. Most important among these were the first two named. Greek shepherds left their native hills to seek their fortunes here as peddlers of fruits and candies. The more adventuresome among them then tried their hands in mill work at Lowell, Mass., found the change to their liking, passed the word to their compatriots, sent home for their wives, prospective wives, and relatives, and soon Lowell had one of the largest Greek colonies in the United States. Meanwhile, the New Bedford whaling vessels which touched at the Azores and other Portuguese island possessions, picked up the native islanders for the whaling voyage and discharged them at New Bedford, Mass. Here many of the Portuguese islanders drifted into the cotton mills of the city, and they too lost no time in sending for their families and relatives. With the decline in the whaling industry, those Portuguese who had continued to serve on the New Bedford whalers now turned to the mills for a new means of livelihood.

The shrinkage in immigration which accompanied the First World War, and the new immigration laws which followed this conflict virtually ended the flow of laborers from overseas into the New England mills. Along with this change went the postwar decline in the New England section of the industry. By 1930 over half of the cotton mill workers in this area were native born, whereas at the beginning of the century less than one-third of the operatives met this specification.

Except for the Scotch and English, who were not an important factor after the Civil War, the immigrants who came to work in the New England mills were largely without industrial experience before coming to this country. They were mainly small farmers from Ireland and French Canada, shepherds from Greece, and fishermen from the Portuguese isles. And whether they came from these places or from Poland or Italy, Turkey or Lithuania, this was true of all—that when they crossed the ocean to take up residence here they took no half-way step. They entered not only a new and strange cultural arena and an unfamiliar political scene, but they embarked upon an occupational career which was completely alien to their previous methods of earning a living.

In this latter respect the New England immigrant was the counterpart of the native Southern farmers who filled the Southern mills when this latter region began its cotton manufacturing development in the eighties. Just as the immigrant sought a more abundant economic life in the New England cotton mills, so did the Southern native seek in the new cotton mills of the South an escape from the debt-burdened agricultural economy of the area—an escape from the perennial round of going into debt to get the seed and supplies to put his fields in cotton and to keep the family in food until picking time, then only to find that the crop barely covered or failed to cover at all the debt he had incurred. Just as the European background of the New England laborer has faded with the curtailment of immigration and the continual processes of Americanization, so has the agricultural heritage of the Southern worker receded as the Southern mill operative of today has grown up in a mill village whereas his father had been raised on the farm.

In both regions the labor of women and children has played an important role in the industry. Through its long association with the household system of manufacture in which the work was done at home mainly by women and children, the textile industry as a whole became characterized by low wage scales—for was not the work done at home merely a means to keep the devil from finding work for hands which would otherwise be idle? When cotton manufacturing moved into the factory in this country at the beginning of the nineteenth century it was considered a virtue that its machinery was simple enough for operation by women and children so that there would be no manpower drain from the agricultural pursuits which were then held in higher esteem than factory work. Thus were the family labor system and the low wages characteristic of household

manufacture carried over into the cotton mills. The mill owner has not thought of the husband of the family as the one upon whom devolved the support of a family, rather has the husband been considered just one part of a family working unit—and wages have been scaled according to this concept. The larger the earnings of the father, the less likely has it been that the mother and children would be found at work in the mill, thus reducing the mill owner's available labor supply. Legislation in the New England states had gone a long way toward the control of the child labor problem in New England mills by the opening of the present century, but the picture was different in the South. Here it remained for federal legislation during the First World War period, combined with technological advance which made the work more concentrated and exhausting, to show the Southern mill owner that his plants could be profitably operated without children.

Dovetailing neatly with the family labor system, the mill village developed. The construction of the early cotton mills in rural New England, along the streams which furnished the motive power for the machinery, meant the simultaneous erection of a community to house the mill's workers. There was no one but the mill owner who would undertake to provide the ways and means of living for a large group of people whose livelihood was dependent upon the success of a single isolated enterprise. Houses, stores, churches, schools—these were provided by the mill owners in an all-embracing paternal system. As the New England mill villages grew into sizable towns, the landlord function was gradually taken over by persons unconnected with the mills, local merchants assumed the storekeeper role formerly handled by the mill store, and by the beginning of the present century there was little of the mill village system left in New England.

The growth of the industry in the South, which started in the eighties, involved the same problems as were faced in New England some years earlier. Here, too, entire communities had to be erected for the mill labor force. As yet, however, the Southern mill village system has not followed that of New England into decline, though the signs are presently pointing that way. Until recently the Southern mill village system provided the mill owners with a powerful means of control over the workers—just as it did earlier in New England. With every aspect of his life subject to manipulation by the employer, the Southern operative who dared the mill owner's wrath took on a large order. The worker who joined a union or protested against working conditions risked much more than his job (which he would

do in other industries as well), for he was very likely to be evicted from the mill-owned house, his credit at the mill-owned store stopped, he and his family barred from the mill-supported church, and the very grounds of the mill village decreed forbidden territory by the mill owner. And if the local post office was in the mill store or on a mill-owned street or property, which was usually the case, he received no mail and was entirely cut off from the outside world. This, indeed, has been the frequent pattern of labor conflict in the Southern cotton mills.

Compared to the strength of the mill owners, the unions in the industry were insignificant before the coming of the C.I.O. Up to 1901 unionism in the cotton mills was largely a conglomeration of independent craft organizations in New England, and was confined to the better-paid and more skilled workers of English, Irish, and Scotch origins. They were unions of loomfixers, weavers, mule spinners, etc., whose interest, as they conceived it, lay in protecting their own skilled group rather than in organizing the unskilled and semi-skilled throughout the industry. With each craft on the lookout for itself, it was not unusual for one craft to work while another struck, or for one craft to win its own point during a strike and return to work while the others remained out—naturally weakening the position of the latter. The indifference of the craft unions toward the unorganized was facilitated by the fact that the semiskilled and unskilled of foreign birth mainly followed the lead of the unions in times of conflict. The 1904 Fall River, Mass., strike, for example, saw 26,000 workers out though not over 6,000 were union members. Similarly, the 1912 Lawrence, Mass., strike brought 25,000 into the streets though the unions had not over 3,000 members at the start. But if the semiskilled and unskilled followed the lead of the skilled craft unions in strikes, they had little contact with unionism once the strike was over. And with the unions paying them so little attention, not a few of the immigrants became strikebreakers and found the conflict a ready means of "upgrading" themselves to the better jobs.

The organization of the United Textile Workers by the American Federation of Labor in 1901 augured well for a while. But the craft groups which had entered the U.T.W. soon fell to quarreling. Money and power, those twin sources of evil, were the roots of the conflict. The officers of the U.T.W. wanted a large treasury, which they intended to build up through the tax which the national union collected from each local and was based on the local's membership.

The larger this per capita tax, the less would be left to the local out of the dues which the latter collected—and the power would follow the money, as it usually does. So as the U.T.W. jacked up its per capita tax, the locals which did not like this trend cut loose and by 1916 there were enough of these to form the American Federation of Textile Operatives as a rival to the U.T.W. Both the U.T.W. and the A.F.T.O. were built along craft lines, for it was only on the questions of money and the distribution of control within the parent organization that the two unions differed.

The A.F.T.O. never ventured outside of the New England mill area where it was founded, but the U.T.W. made occasional forays into the South. Only during the period of the First World War did the U.T.W. have any success in this union *terra incognita*, and this was quickly lost in the "return to normalcy" after the war. The war period also saw new unions try their hand in organizing the cotton mill workers, notably the Amalgamated Textile Workers. Large gains were made by all the unions in the field, but the 1921 Southern strike and the 1922 New England strike plunged the unions into an abyss until the National Industrial Recovery Act rescued them more than a decade later.

The NIRA, with its famous Section 7(a), provided a stimulus to unionism in the industry which brought forth the 1934 general strike—the largest single labor conflict in the history of this country up to that time. But it remained for the Committee for Industrial Organization to capitalize on the awakened desire of the workers for unionization. In March, 1937, the C.I.O. and the U.T.W. agreed on the formation of the Textile Workers Organizing Committee to direct a large-scale campaign along the lines which had been so successful in the steel and automobile industries. The T.W.O.C. took over the U.T.W., and two years later a new union, the Textile Workers Union of America was set up as the C.I.O. affiliate in the textile field. Meanwhile, some of the U.T.W. functionaries had become dissatisfied with the T.W.O.C., parted from the latter organization, and received back from the A.F. of L. the U.T.W. charter which had been revoked by the A.F. of L. when the U.T.W. had refused to discontinue its support of the C.I.O. Caught between the campaigns of the T.W.U.A. and the revived U.T.W., the A.F.T.O. collapsed when its Fall River locals went over to the U.T.W. in the middle of 1942 in an attempt to stave off impending defeat at the hands of the T.W.U.A.—but to no avail, for the T.W.U.A. made almost a complete sweep of the NLRB elections in this city.

The history of union progress and failure in the industry clearly pointed the path for the C.I.O. when the decision to enter the textile field was made. The brief periods of prosperity which the cotton mill unions had enjoyed in the past were marked by a complete disregard of craft lines. The thousands of unskilled and semiskilled workers who perforce flocked to the unions' banners in times of stress and strife showed no interest in the petty problems of autonomy and separatism which consumed the time and energy of the small and skilled craft minority which dominated the unions in the industry. The C.I.O. put aside, once and for all, these obstacles which had so impeded the work of the unions in the past and decided on a clear-cut program of industrial unionism based on the solid ground of written trade agreements covering all the workers in a particular cotton mill.

Before the coming of the C.I.O., the entire history of organization in cotton mills showed only a handful of written contracts. By the end of 1943, the T.W.U.A. contracts covered 121,000 cotton mill workers, and 10,000 more workers were represented by the T.W.U.A. at cotton mills where contract negotiations had not yet been completed—thus making a total of 131,000 cotton mill workers whose collective bargaining agent is the T.W.U.A.-C.I.O. at the time of this writing (January, 1944). With about 10,000 other cotton mill workers represented by the U.T.W.-A.F. of L., and a few thousand in unaffiliated unions, the total number of cotton mill workers represented by unions is probably about 145,000, compared to the previous peak of 110,000 reached in the period of the First World War. In terms of the stability embodied in a union contract, today's unionism is on a much firmer basis than ever before, for contracts were rare before the coming of the C.I.O. in contrast to the contract coverage of today.

As ever, the unions are much stronger in New England than in the South. Though about three-quarters of the industry's wage earners are in the South, less than half the workers represented by the unions are in this area. Unless the unions can organize the South to a greater extent than at present, their positions in New England will become difficult.

Aside from the general union objectives of improving working conditions in the South, the unions here have the particular problem of narrowing or eliminating the North-South wage differential. Ordinarily the present war boom in cotton mill employment would have provided the ideal background for the union campaign looking toward

this end. In 1942, however, the National War Labor Board refused to go along with the T.W.U.A. and U.T.W. request for a wage increase for mills in both regions, which included an extra increase to the Southern workers for the express purpose of eliminating the differential. Instead, the Board awarded an equal increase in both regions and thus left the differential untouched. This action of the Board effectively freezes the North-South wage differential for the duration of the war.

As the decline in the proportion of foreign-born workers has made the task of the unions easier in New England, so has the increasing age of the industry in the South helped the unions here. Less and less frequently are the Southern organizers confronted with workers completely new to industrial life and alien to the tenets of unionism. But much remains to be done in the South. With few exceptions, the Southern mill owners remain hostile—hostile not only to unionism itself, but to the very concept of the “freedom to organize” which is embodied in the National Labor Relations Act. This act has taken from the mill owners their most powerful antiunion weapon—the discriminatory discharge, which was accompanied by evictions from mill-owned houses and the other pressures made available by the mill village system. So long as this law remains effective, the unions have a fighting chance of reaching the workers to protect them against the competitive labor exploitation which has characterized the industry in the past.



THE BEGINNING of the twentieth century saw America's oldest factory industry enter a new phase of its development. In every country which is in the machine era of its life and in those which are taking the first steps toward industrialization, the textile industry—provider of a basic fabricated commodity—has been in the forefront of the change and growth. Since the Industrial Revolution in England, cotton manufacture has been the first of the textile group to exhibit the essential characteristics of a machine and factory industry.

America's cotton mills were not only the first units of industrial production in the nation's history to be equipped for large-scale manufacture in all the processes from the intake of the raw materials to the finished product. They also took the lead in assuming the modern form of financial organization and corporate structure. The country's first important manufacturing enterprise to be corporately organized was a cotton mill. It was the Boston Manufacturing Company, born in 1813. This mill was also the first in the world to spin and weave with power machines in the same plant.<sup>1</sup> After this beginning a long series of corporations in cotton manufacturing appeared. Quite early, "promoters" played a substantial role in the industry. Cotton mills likewise showed at an early date that dispersion of ownership coupled with control of their direction in the hands of groups of influential individuals who held but a small proportion of the stock, which is regarded as a fairly recent characteristic of America's economy. Up to the Civil War these developments were not found to a comparable degree in any other industry.<sup>2</sup>

Other manufacturing fields gradually came to be organized along corporate lines, but cotton manufacturing enjoyed a lead in this respect which was hard to overcome. In 1900, when two-thirds of the value of all manufactured goods was produced by corporations, the proportion of cotton goods produced by mill corporations was almost 90 per cent.<sup>3</sup> Nineteen years later, when 87 per cent of all manu-

factured goods was produced by corporations, the corresponding figure for cotton goods was over 98 per cent.<sup>4</sup> By 1929 practically 99 per cent of the cotton goods came from mills which were corporately owned.<sup>5</sup> At that date corporations accounted for an estimated 94 per cent of all manufactures.<sup>6</sup>

The Civil War ushered in a trying period for the cotton manufacturing industry, then almost completely confined to New England. Together with the large demand for goods there was, especially after 1863, a disastrous shortage of cotton which was not felt earlier because in anticipation of a poor crop in 1862 the New England mills stocked up on raw cotton. By shifting production to lighter goods the mills managed to make a normal one-year supply of cotton last almost two years. By 1863, however, the available raw cotton was equivalent to only about one-quarter of normal needs. The major portion of this sparse supply came from Southern territories in control of the Union armies. Some cotton was reimported from England and cotton was also raised in the Northern and border states. When frosts did not interfere, the crop from these areas helped slightly to alleviate the severe shortage.<sup>7</sup> Lack of cotton meant that manufacturing operations had to be drastically curtailed. By 1863 less than half the New England spindles were being used. In January of the following year not a single spindle in the great mill center of Lowell was running and the price of cotton rose to over \$900 a bale.<sup>8</sup>

Sharp curtailment of operations did not mean a decline in the productive capacity of New England mills. On the contrary, their potential ability to produce increased, as did the extent of the individual company's control over the product from raw material to finished cloth. Excise taxes imposed during the war aided centralization and integration of the industry. Goods spun, woven, and dyed in separate plants had to pay a series of taxes. But when these processes were combined in one plant or firm only one tax was paid.<sup>9</sup> Accompanying this trend toward centralization and integration went an increase in plant capacity to meet the demand anticipated when the struggle between North and South would end. Mills took advantage of the suspension of manufacturing to extend their plants and to build new ones.<sup>10</sup>

The tremendous expansion of American industry which followed the Civil War and the westward movement naturally affected cotton manufacturing. To this industry fell the task of clothing the rapidly increasing population. It also was called upon to satisfy the numerous industrial demands for cotton goods such as tarpaulin and bagging.

Within a few years after the close of the Civil War profits soared, and New England cotton manufacturers were complaining that the only obstacle to greater production was a labor shortage.<sup>11</sup> The rapid rate of growth of the industry in the period between the Civil War and 1900 is illustrated by the experience of two mill centers. In Manchester, N.H., 100,000 of the 450,000 spindles in place in 1883 were installed in the years 1879 and 1880 alone.<sup>12</sup> Mills in Fall River, Mass., quintupled their spindles in place between 1865 and 1875, and between 1870 and 1872 alone doubled the number of spindles.<sup>13</sup> The beginning of the development of the Southern section of the industry after 1880 provided another source of increased capacity in addition to that of the long-established New England industry.

The expansion of the industry was greatly facilitated by the perfection of the ring spindle in the late seventies and the introduction of the automatic loom in the mid-nineties. In mule spinning part of the machine moved in and out from the frame while twisting and drawing out the yarn. To repair broken threads required the operator to bend over the moving section. This involved considerable exertion and skill. In ring spinning this moving section was eliminated and repairing breaks in the yarn became simple light work. Before the introduction of the automatic loom the bobbin which carried the filler threads had to be replaced by the weaver. In the automatic loom these bobbins were fed in automatically. Within a few years after the automatic loom appeared, it was improved by the electrical stop. Now not only were the bobbins fed automatically but when a thread broke the loom stopped immediately. With ring spinning the mill owner could use women to spin strong fine yarns at high speeds, without the necessity of relying on the skilled male labor that was used in mule spinning. With the automatic loom the weave room was made to keep up with the output of the spinners and the proportions of spoilage and seconds was reduced while the speed of the looms could be increased manyfold.

From its very beginnings, the industry has ranked among the leaders in manufacturing employment. Since 1900 it has only once been as low as fourth in the number of wage earners, and it has frequently been first or second.<sup>14</sup> The industry has grown with the growth of the country as a whole, but its expansion has never been steady. Periods of feverish activity have been succeeded by years of comparative quietude. During the latter the industry marked time while the growth of population and purchasing power caught up with its productive capacity. The peak of employment in cotton textiles was

reached in 1923 and the high-water mark measured by the number of spindles was attained in 1925. From the mid-twenties to 1939 the number of spindles has declined steadily while the number of wage earners declined irregularly until the present war brought a spurt in employment which, for the time being, eclipsed the 1923 peak by rising to over 520,000 in June, 1942.<sup>15</sup> Even while employment was declining, however, output was maintained by the increased productivity of labor, improved and faster machinery, and multiple-shift operation.

As the industry as a whole grew, so did the importance of the larger establishments.<sup>16</sup> In 1909, the first year for which detailed data are available, the establishments with a product valued at \$1,000,000 or more were 12 per cent of the total number of establishments in the industry, produced 53 per cent of the value of the industry's product, and employed 51 per cent of the industry's wage earners. By 1939 these establishments represented 31 per cent of the total establishments, manufactured 74 per cent of the industry's product in terms of value, and employed 71 per cent of the industry's wage earners. In terms of the number of wage earners per establishment, in 1909 the large firms (those with over 500 workers) were 15 per cent of the establishments and employed 58 per cent of the wage earners, while in 1939 these firms were 21 per cent of the establishments and employed 61 per cent of the workers. The regional data, available up to 1919, show that the establishments with over 500 workers were more important in New England than in the South, employing over three-quarters of the wage earners in the former region as against less than half in the latter region in this year.

The industry's giants (those with over 1,000 workers) were also most important in New England. In 1919 New England firms in this category were 13 per cent of the area's establishments and had 53 per cent of the area's wage earners, and there had been little change in this respect since the beginning of the century. In the South, these firms with over 1,000 workers were not so prominent as in New England, but they were moving ahead rapidly. In 1909 they represented 2 per cent of the Southern establishments and employed 12 per cent of the Southern workers, but by 1919 they were 3 per cent of the establishments and had 18 per cent of the workers in the Southern mills. From 1923 to 1931 the importance of these big establishments declined in the industry as a whole because of the liquidation of large New England units. The Southern mills, however, continued to grow<sup>17</sup> and by 1939 most of the loss had been recovered.

In brief, the data classifying establishments by value of product and by number of wage earners for the industry as a whole and for the two major regions show that the larger firms have forged ahead to employ an increasing proportion of the industry's wage earners and to capture a larger part of its output. The larger plants have been more important in New England than in the South, and the liquidation of large New England units accounts for the temporary decline in the position of the large plants in the industry in the twenties. Growing Southern mills have compensated for this, and by 1939 the industry's large plants had mainly recovered their place.

The earliest competitors of the American industry were the older established cotton mills of Great Britain, but the ability of the home mill owner and the quality of American labor soon proved more than a match for the ex-mother country. Before the Civil War, American mills were well past the infant stage and were mostly unaffected by the ups and downs of the tariff. Duties were raised to prohibitive heights during the Civil War and became more complex and differentiated. The rates on coarse goods trended downward thereafter while the rate on fine goods went up steadily. From the Civil War to 1913, the coarse and medium goods, which were the bulk of American production, were made more cheaply here than abroad and imports would have been unlikely even under lower tariffs. The imports in this period were fine goods and specialties in which England had a definite advantage, and American fine goods mills were clearly dependent on the tariff. These imports came in the face of high tariff rates, and American mills admitted that they could not be more successful in this field without even more drastic duties.<sup>18</sup>

The 1913 tariff act simplified the schedules and reduced the rates. The lowest rates remained on coarse goods and the highest on fine goods. This reduction was received with forebodings by the fine goods mills, but the war obscured its effects. After the war the rates were raised again and, though imports were reduced up to 1929, the fine items which other countries were more efficient in producing continued to come in. England especially was underselling American fine goods in the face of a very generous tariff protection for the home industry.<sup>19</sup> The difficulties experienced by the entire industry during the twenties could not be attributed to insufficient protection, since imports were only 4 per cent of the United States' production. For some imported specialties, the American manufacturers admitted that a 150 per cent rate would be needed if they were to compete successfully. But the fact that there were any imports at all caused the mills

to ask continually for higher rates. Up to 1930 the vast bulk of cotton goods produced in the United States needed no tariff protection. Though the fine goods mills had foreign competitors in the home market, the coarse and medium goods mills which were most important in the industry were well able to hold their own market, and as a matter of fact they increased their exports up to 1929.<sup>20</sup>

It was not until after the start of the depression of 1929 that the American industry, hitherto supreme in the domestic market for medium and lower grades of goods and formidable in the export market for these grades, found itself seriously challenged by foreign mills in both sectors.

Competition for export sales was, of course, not new. Japanese and British Indian mills had been close on the heels of the American exporter of cotton goods since the beginning of the century and, by the end of the First World War, the Chinese, Near Eastern, and Indian markets were practically lost to American mills. Increasing exports to the Philippines, South America, Central America, and the West Indies had more than made up for this loss, so that American exports made new highs in the postwar period and the 1929 exports were not much below the 1922 peak.<sup>21</sup> After 1929, however, exports dropped rapidly from the 564 million yards of 1929 to a mere 187 million yards in 1935.<sup>22</sup> Japanese and British Indian mills made heavy inroads into the markets which had sustained American exports in the twenties. The Philippines, which were formerly our best export market, became the terminus for greatly increased exports from Japan. By 1936 American shipments to the Philippines were only 26 per cent of the cotton goods imported into the islands, whereas ten years earlier the American mills had practically a monopoly.<sup>23</sup> The Japanese also made rapid advances in the Latin-American countries.

The American mills, for the first time in over one hundred years, also found themselves with foreign competition in the home market for the lower grade goods. The concentration of Japanese imports in a few lines made the threat doubly serious. By 1935, for example, Japan had captured 37 per cent of the home market for bleached goods and 21 per cent of the market for cotton velveteens.<sup>24</sup> Japanese goods were underselling the home product in the very heart of the Southern cotton mill belt, and in the store windows of the South, Japanese products were on display at prices which could not be met by the American competitor just a few miles away.

The American mills pointed to their increased costs under the NIRA and the cotton processing tax, and asked for the abolition of

the tax and for higher duties.<sup>25</sup> The industry succeeded in getting a tariff increase in May, 1936, but this was only a temporary relief from Japanese competition. Late in 1936 a delegation led by Claudius T. Murchison of the Cotton-Textile Institute visited Japan in an attempt to secure through direct negotiation some relief from Japanese competition, which had reached 70 million yards imported in 1936 as against 1 million yards which had come in in 1933. When the delegation reached Japan in December, 1936, the Japanese had already booked orders in the United States for 155 million yards for 1937.<sup>26</sup> Just what arguments were used by the American representatives has not been divulged, but one may be sure that the Japanese were faced with the alternative of a quota agreement or a full-scale American campaign for prohibitive duties. The result was the signing of a private international trade agreement. Japan was not to export to the United States in 1937 more than the 155 million yards for which orders had already been booked, and for 1938 the limit was set at 100 million yards. In 1938 the industry expressed itself as satisfied with the pact and a renewal was signed in December, 1938, which kept the average imports in 1939-40 at 100 million yards per year.<sup>27</sup> With the beginning of the present war, American mills were in a position to sell their entire output without regard for outside competition, and the Japanese problem vanished even before this country became an actual participant in the war.

While the American mills found it increasingly difficult to compete with other countries in the export market, and before the war, had reached a truce with their chief competitor in the domestic field, the fertility of modern science and the volatility of human tastes have provided new problems for the American mill owner. The scientist presented a manmade competitor in the form of rayon and other synthetic fabrics, while the stylist handed the mill owner a puzzling kaleidoscope of fashion changes.

The consumption figures for the different fibers in the United States since 1900 show that amid all fluctuations cotton has remained by far the leading textile fibre. Cotton has accounted for about three-quarters of the total textile fibre consumption in this country since the beginning of the present century. Rayon accounted for less than 1 per cent of the total consumption before 1924, but since then has taken rapid strides to reach 6 per cent of the total in 1934-35, mostly at the expense of non-cotton fibers.<sup>28</sup>

It is no small tribute to the adaptability of the industry and the versatility of its labor that cotton has actually maintained its place

in fiber consumption in competition with silk and rayon while the prices of these competitors declined relative to that of cotton. This has been done by cotton textiles in the face of wide and frequent fluctuations in the price of its raw materials, and with a merchandising system which is cumbersome, disjointed, and fraught with speculative influence.<sup>29</sup>

The competition of rayon and silk is, of course, a competition primarily of style in the apparel field. Rayon and silk came heavily into the market at decreasing cost in the postwar period when all lines of apparel were increasingly subject to the influence of fashion changes. By 1936, 57 million pounds of rayon were being used in hosiery and underwear—practically all at the expense of cotton; 145 million pounds of rayon in dress goods were at least 50 per cent at the expense of cotton; 16.5 million pounds of rayon in curtains, bedspreads, etc., were three-quarters at cotton's expense; and 29 million pounds of rayon in linings were 80 per cent at the expense of cotton.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile silk stockings replaced cotton and silk cloth competed severely with the output of the fine goods mills.<sup>31</sup>

But the cause of cotton was not lost. The popularization of motor-ing and the expansion of the automobile industry, with its use of large amounts of cotton tire fabric and cotton materials for body interiors, and other increasing industrial uses helped keep cotton on top. At the same time, the American passion for cleanliness put cotton uniforms on employees in more and more hotels, stores, and plants.<sup>32</sup>

The industry itself took steps to meet the new competition. Whereas before the war 80 per cent of the industry's output was considered "staples" (in the sense that there was little style change), after the war almost all became style goods subject to rapid change and irregular buying by converters, jobbers, manufacturers, and the other customers of the cotton mill.<sup>33</sup> The industry was at first slow to respond to the pressure for change—the mills were organized for large, steady production of staples sold in full season orders, while the market demanded many different kinds of goods in hand-to-mouth lots. It was soon realized, however, that the change was no temporary phenomenon and the value of adjusting to the new conditions was shown by the fact that all of the fifteen mills in New England which increased their capacity in 1922-1925, made style specialties and none made single staple fabrics.<sup>34</sup> Where formerly cotton apparel made little appeal outside the strictly utilitarian, now increased attention to styling and color in women's wear and emphasis on comfort in men's cotton suits have removed the stigma of cheap drabness from cotton



and made cotton clothes acceptable to many who would otherwise have preferred the flashiness of rayon where they could not afford the price of silk. Even the common household towel and a host of other cotton items in the home have blossomed into variegated patterns and matched color sets. Of no little importance also have been the development of preshrinking and antiwrinkle processes, treatments to make the fabric water-repellent, etc. Under the aegis of the Cotton-Textile Institute, which was established in 1926, and with the co-operation of retailers all over the country, successful cotton fashion shows have been held, and campaigns have been undertaken to recapture for cotton some uses which have slipped away to competitors and to gain for cotton the place now held by jute in the covering of the cotton bales themselves<sup>35</sup> When a rayon tire fabric was announced for the first time, a cotton mill long prominent in the manufacture of cotton tire fabric brought forth an improved product to meet the incipient competitor. The New Uses Section of the Cotton-Textile Institute has integrated and organized these activities and so far the history of fiber competition shows that cotton has replaced its losses in one use by gains in another field. The Second World War developed new uses for cotton goods in the form of treated and rubberized fabrics for collapsible boats and bulletproof gasoline tanks.<sup>36</sup> What the future holds, no one can foretell, but it is certain that there will be no more easy victories at the expense of cotton.

The continued growth of the industry in the South<sup>37</sup> after the First World War accentuated the problem of the relation of the industry's capacity and output to the purchasing power of the market. The industry has always been characterized by spasmodic rather than steady growth, but the development of the country and the increase in population had heretofore always taken up the slack within a relatively short period. The slowing down of the rate of population increase, however, meant that it became more difficult, if not impossible, to take up the slack except by a complete cessation of the increase in spindleage. Before the First World War this difficulty was already indicated by the declining rate of profits in the industry. The war, however, obscured the real condition of the industry. The great temporary demand for goods aggravated the discrepancy between capacity and profitable peacetime market. The profitability of the war period resulted in increased capacity, an increase which was less a matter of actual physical plant than of a change in productive methods.

Before the war, night operations were not common and were most often used when business was very good. During the war the night

shift became all but universal, especially in the South where the mill villages were built up for two-shift operation. When the war demand passed the second shift remained, particularly in the South. In spite of continued overproduction, the night shift was retained. Even though the lowering of costs through continuous operation was slight, any advantage at all counted in a depressed market. The individual mill had to scramble for production even though the industry as a whole would have benefited by curtailment. The end of the First World War left the industry with not only a physical capacity ahead of the profitable market, but with a double-shift system of operation to further aggravate this unbalanced situation.

Yet, paradoxically enough, the industry continued to grow. The key to this seeming inconsistency is found in the diversity of the industry and in its interregional competition. Actually it was the Southern section of the industry that grew. The South grew more rapidly than New England declined. Nevertheless, even in the South there were mills in distress while new mills were being erected and old mills enlarged. This phenomenon was a result, partly of the diversity of the industry, and partly of the activity of persons outside the industry.

To the Chambers of Commerce of many Southern towns, the establishment of a cotton mill was the first essential step toward the desired industrialization and expansion of the town. The North and East were circularized for investors to build the mill which was to "put the town on the map"—and too many towns succeeded in this goal. A further stimulus came from the Southern power companies which were expanding their facilities and were looking for customers for their increased output. The cotton mill customers were secured by rates low enough to add to the prospects of profit already held out by the Chambers of Commerce, and by more direct measures where necessary. At least one power company was directly responsible for the construction of a chain of mills to consume the power it had developed.

The diversity of the industry, however, was a more important factor in its overdevelopment. Actually the "cotton textile industry" produces a conglomerate mass of goods whose only common factor is the basic fiber of cotton. From heavy tarpaulins to gossamer curtains, from sturdy upholstery fabrics to cheesecloth, from beltings for industry to shirtings for the back and toweling for the home, the industry produces dozens of kinds of products in dozens of grades. With such a situation, it is seldom that all lines are profitless. There are always some products which are making money—always some place in the

industry where another mill will still bring profits to the investor, or an expansion seem just good business sense. And so with the South growing faster than New England declined, the industry as a whole kept growing in good years and bad.

The gravity of the situation was not lost to the more advanced members of the industry, but there seemed to be no way to control further development. There were over one thousand units in the industry and each mill management was steeped in an individualism which brooked few exceptions.

Although the larger units employ over half of the industry's workers, there is little in the way of monopoly in the industry as a whole. The situation is somewhat unique in that the technology of the industry has so developed that the largest mills possess no marked advantages in production costs over the smaller units which would enable them to dominate the field and determine the policies of the industry. This factor of technology and costs in relation to size has in the past been the nemesis of consolidations and mergers arrived at with monopolistic intent. Not only has the technological development of the industry been less favorable to the large units as against the small than in many other industries, but efforts to monopolize even a particular line or type of goods are fraught with danger. Most of the machinery used in the industry is, within limits, adjustable to the manufacture of more than one line. If one line of goods is persistently profitable, mills in a less profitable line will shift their machinery to the better line. During the beginnings of the national defense program, for example, when the Office of Price Administration and Civilian Supply in May, 1941, placed the first ceilings on the prices of certain cotton goods, mills started to switch their machinery to the production of items on which no price ceiling had been established.<sup>38</sup> In fact, the large firms are most frequently found in that margin of the industry where only specialized machinery may be used, or where brand names or other marketing advantages help to protect the mill from the type of competition to which the rest of the industry is subject.

The chaotic condition of the industry in the twenties, the unbridled competition which too often came at the expense of the mill worker, led to much soul-searching by the leaders of the industry. Many plans were advanced and many ideas explored with the object of bringing some stability and order into the industry. Out of this came the formation of the Cotton-Textile Institute in 1926, but the Institute was precluded from dealing with one of the fundamental problems—the

interregional competition which was the main concern of the New England mills. Another object—that of accurate inventory and other statistical data on the industry—was not attained because of the refusal of important units to co-operate. Only the New Uses Section of the Institute succeeded in securing helping hands for its promotion campaigns.

The essential problem of the adjustment of the capacity and output of the industry to the needs and purchasing power of a nation now growing more slowly was tackled by the mill operators and their association only after the 1929 depression began—though it was apparent long before this that the ills of the industry were chronic and not merely accidental. The initial efforts under the auspices of the Cotton-Textile Institute were in the direction of curtailing production through pledges on limiting hours and night work for women and minors. Considering the voluntary nature of these pledges, the results obtained were quite good, but otherwise little can be said for the effort. The limits set by the pledges, even if completely obeyed, would have been an actual limitation only for the worst actors in the industry.

What the industry needed was the regulation and curtailment of productive hours according to the needs of the market, based on complete inventory data from mill to consumer. Curtailment on a local scale was not new in the industry. Though mills in particular localities and lines had frequently acted together in this way, never had the whole industry been so controlled. It was the possibility of the latter type of regulation that led the industry to welcome the National Industrial Recovery Administration. Under the NRA, productive hours were subject to control and curtailment, and actually the code authority in its brief but eventful history did decree nine periods of curtailment besides the general maximum hour and shift limits. Furthermore, the code stopped the expansion of the industry by limiting new machinery installations to replacements of older machinery which was then destroyed.

With the invalidation of the NRA in May, 1935, the industry was forced to return to the former unsatisfactory method of voluntary pledges to maintain fair labor conditions. Groups of mills making particular lines of goods also undertook voluntary production curtailment programs. In June, 1939, for example, the operators of more than 95 per cent of the print cloth looms in the South agreed to a three-month curtailment program to improve market conditions.<sup>39</sup> The legality of the latter step has now become a matter of doubt since the Roosevelt administration antitrust drive got under way and the

Department of Justice early in 1940 brought suit against those concerned in the print cloth production curtailment.<sup>40</sup> The start of the present war made such restrictions of output unnecessary. As a whole, precode conditions of competition prevail in the industry. This means that the crucial problem of adjustment of capacity and output to peacetime purchasing power remains unsolved.

It must be remembered, however, that this question of adjustment, and the very existence of this problem, is closely interwoven with the present distribution (or maldistribution) of purchasing power among the mass of the people of this country. The industry does not produce more than the people *need*—it produces more than they can afford to buy. The great difference between these two aspects of the industry's position is apparent when we consider that in 1935, in connection with two items of everyday use, mills of this country produced enough shirtings for only three shirts per adult male per year and enough sheetings for only one sheet per family per year.<sup>41</sup> Any redistribution of the purchasing power of the American people which would enable the lower income groups to buy more of the cotton products which they need would mean not curtailment of operations but expansion. But for the present the industry is still ahead of the peacetime buying power of the people.

Needless to say, the first rumblings of the present war brought the industry to its feet.<sup>42</sup> For the year ending July 31, 1941, cotton consumption by American mills was the largest in history, while for the full year of 1941 cloth production of cotton mills was 11.9 billion square yards—an increase of more than 20 per cent over the 1940 figure—compared to an annual average in recent years of about 8 billion square yards.<sup>43</sup> Only the lack of available labor due to the difficulties of housing more workers in the Southern mill towns, the competition of better paying war plants in both areas, and the unbalance of productive equipment prevented the attainment of even higher output figures.<sup>44</sup>

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER

<sup>1</sup> H. E. Michl, *The Textile Industries*, The Textile Foundation, Washington, D.C., 1938, p. 69.

<sup>2</sup> Adolf A. Berle, Jr., and Gardiner C. Means, *The Modern Corporation and Private Property*, Commerce Clearing House Inc., New York, Chicago, Washington, 1932, pp. 10-12.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States 1910*, Vol. VIII, *Manufactures 1909*, p. 137. Hereinafter all United States censuses will be cited in the short form, i.e., *1920 Census*, *1925 Census of Manufactures*, etc.

<sup>4</sup> 1920 *Census*, Vol. VIII, pp. 108, 110, Vol. X, p. 163.

<sup>5</sup> 1930 *Census, Manufactures 1929*, Vol. I, p. 98.

<sup>6</sup> Berle and Means, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Victor S. Clark, *History of Manufactures in the United States*, published for the Carnegie Institute of Washington, D.C., by McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., New York, 1929 edition (three volumes), Vol. II, pp. 26-28.

<sup>8</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 29-30; Edward Atkinson, *Cotton and Cotton Manufacture in the United States*, Franklin Press, Rand, Avery & Co., Boston, 1880, p. 26; U.S. Senate, Committee on Education and Labor, *Report on Relations Between Capital and Labor*, 1885 (four volumes), Vol. II, p. 375. The latter source is hereinafter cited as *Labor and Capital 1885*.

<sup>9</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 13.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 102; Edith Abbott, *Women in Industry*, D. Appleton & Co., New York, 1910, pp. 142-3.

<sup>12</sup> *Labor and Capital 1885, op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 19.

<sup>13</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 105-6.

<sup>14</sup> *Census of Manufactures, 1899-1939*.

<sup>15</sup> *Appendix, Table 1*; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Monthly Labor Review*, September, 1942, p. 450.

<sup>16</sup> *Census of Manufactures, 1914*, Vol. II, p. 27, 1921, p. 184, 1923, p. 203, 1925, pp. 1224-5; 1910 *Census*, Vol. X, p. 44; 1920 *Census*, Vol. X, p. 163; 1930 *Census, Manufactures*, Vol. I, pp. 78-81; *Census of Manufactures, 1939, Summary Statistics For Establishments Grouped by Size as Measured by Value of Product*, December, 1941, pp. 26, 27, 29, 30, 32, 33, 35-36; *Census of Manufactures, 1914*, Vol. II, p. 28, 1921, pp. 1324-5, 1923, p. 1182-3; 1900 *Census*, Vol. IX, p. 69; 1910 *Census*, Vol. X, p. 45; 1920 *Census*, Vol. X, p. 162; 1930 *Census, Manufactures*, Vol. I, pp. 66-67; National Recovery Administration, Statistics Section, *The Cotton Textile Industry*, Statistical Materials, No. 1, December, 1935, p. 48; *Census of Manufactures, 1939, Summary Statistics For Establishments Grouped by Size as Measured by Number of Wage Earners*, November, 1941, pp. 26, 27, 29-30.

<sup>17</sup> Ben F. Lemert, *The Cotton Textile Industry of the Southern Appalachian Piedmont*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1933, pp. 120-1.

<sup>18</sup> *Report of the Industrial Commission*, 56th Congress, 1st Session, House of Representatives, Document 476, Part 2, 1900-1902 (19 volumes), Vol. XIV, p. 535. Hereinafter cited as *Industrial Commission*.

<sup>19</sup> Louis Bader, *World Developments in the Cotton Industry*, New York University Press, New York, 1925, pp. 7-8.

<sup>20</sup> Stephen Jay Kennedy, *Profits and Losses in Textiles*, Harper & Brothers, New York and London, 1936, p. 158; F. W. Taussig, *Some Aspects of the Tariff Question*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1931, pp. 262-95, 451-63.

<sup>21</sup> Lemert, *op. cit.*, pp. 124-61; Kennedy, *op. cit.*, p. 158. The 1922 figure was 587 million yards as against 564 million in 1929.

<sup>22</sup> Kennedy, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

<sup>23</sup> *The New York Times*, September 17, 1937.

<sup>24</sup> Kennedy, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-60.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Senate, Committee on Finance, *Hearings on S.Res.79*, 74th Congress, 1st Session, Washington, 1935, Part 5, pp. 1635ff.

<sup>26</sup> *The New York Times*, December 20, 1938.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, December 20, 1938.

<sup>28</sup> Cabinet Committee, *Cotton Textile Industry*, 74th Congress, 1st Session, Senate, Document No. 126, Washington, 1935, p. 83. (A report on the industry by a Cabinet committee appointed by Franklin D. Roosevelt and printed as a Senate document.) Hereinafter cited as Cabinet Committee.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83; Claudius T. Murchison, "Southern Textile Manufacturing," *The*

*Annals*, January, 1931, American Academy of Political and Social Science, Philadelphia, pp. 36-39.

<sup>80</sup> Charles K. Everett, "Cotton Consumption in the United States," *The Annals*, September, 1937, pp. 44-46.

<sup>81</sup> Cecil Eaton Fraser and Georges F. Doriot, *Analyzing Our Industries*, McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., New York and London, 1932, p. 115.

<sup>82</sup> Everett, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-38.

<sup>83</sup> Lemert, *op. cit.*, p. 126; *Southern Textile Manufacturing*, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-39; Henry P. Kendall, "What Can Management Do To Increase Security?" *The Annals*, March, 1931, pp. 140-1; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, *Industrial Structure of New England*, Domestic Commerce Series, No. 28, Washington, 1930, pp. 280-1.

<sup>84</sup> *Industrial Structure of New England*, *op. cit.*, pp. 301, 307, 310.

<sup>85</sup> Everett, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-44; Kennedy, *op. cit.*, p. 153; Simon N. Whitney, *Trade Associations and Industrial Control*, Central Book Company, New York, 1934, p. 64.

<sup>86</sup> *The New York Times*, July 10, 1942.

<sup>87</sup> See Chapter 7 for the full story of the Southern development.

<sup>88</sup> *The New York Times*, July 2, 1941, November 16, 1941, Section 3.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, June 22, 1939.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, January 4, 1940, January 7, 1940.

<sup>91</sup> Everett, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>92</sup> *The New York Times*, November 21, 1939.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, August 16, 1941, January 2, 1942, August 9, 1942, Section 3.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, January 2, 1942, August 9, 1942, Section 3.

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### 3 *THE NEW ENGLAND MILL VILLAGE*

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WHEN COTTON manufacturing began its real development as a factory industry in this country over a century ago, the favored sources of power were the swift-running streams which were numerous in New England. The traveller who today visits the mills which are still operating, and the sites of once prosperous but now forgotten cotton mills, in New England, still finds many evidences of this early dependence on water power. The dam, thrown across the stream which provided the life blood for the machinery, is now unused. The racing canals are now stagnant—their once swirling waters still and quiet as though from a bustling and active youth they had retired to a placid old age. These are constant reminders of the time when nature told the mill owner where to locate. Then, the worker on his way to the mill in the half-light of early morning glanced anxiously at the water, carefully noting its level, for if the water dropped too low there would be no power to turn the wheels—and no pay for that day and perhaps for days or weeks at a time. Then, no industrial location engineer visited an area, surveyed its labor supply, its unions or their absence, proximity to rail and highway, sounded out the local Chamber of Commerce, and drew up charts carefully covering and equating all the factors of advantage and disadvantage of this location as against that—with the source of motive power for the machinery frequently being little more than a matter of stringing electric power lines from the nearest power station.

This source of motive power for the machinery predetermined the location of the mills. Thus the New England mills were established in the sparsely settled river valleys convenient to the direct use of water power. The building of a mill in these locations would have been impractical without provision being made for the housing of the prospective employees. There was no realtor group able or willing to erect an entire village for tenants who would be dependent solely upon the success of a single plant for the income out of which the rent would be paid. Consequently, the building of a mill meant the



simultaneous erection by the mill interests of all the necessary facilities for living. Thus came into being the cotton mill village, a community in which the workers spent their days in the mill, their nights in houses owned by the same mill, bought whatever they needed in the company store which was owned and run by the mill, and in all likelihood attended a church and sent their children to a school supported by the mill; and if the worker was single, there would be a boarding-house run either by the mill itself or by a housekeeper under contract to the mill.

Data on mill village conditions before 1900 in New England is relatively scarce and in many cases the available evidence is not as sound as might be desired. In the period between the Civil War and 1900, the conditions which made the mill village a necessity in New England began to abate; population was increasing and former mill villages were growing into good-sized towns and cities. Stores other than those run by the mills were opened and private homeowners were building and renting to the mill operatives on a simple landlord-tenant basis. Nevertheless, many mills built as late as 1883 in populous centers also erected tenements to house their workers, for the mill-owned house served as a means of control over the employees and was frequently a source of profit.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the mill owner was certain of collecting the rent out of the wages.<sup>2</sup> The rentals for the mill-owned houses were initially lower than in outside houses, but in some cases they were also in much poorer condition and were avoided by the operatives.<sup>3</sup> The increase in population in the mill centers and the building of tenements by real estate operators brought the rentals of outside houses to about the same level as those owned by the mill. By the middle eighties there is evidence that workers could get housing accommodations outside the mill tenements at little or no difference in price,<sup>4</sup> though twenty years later there appeared data which indicated that mill houses were renting for less than outside houses.<sup>5</sup> The decline in mill housing itself may have acted to allow a raise in rents on houses not owned by the mills.

The concomitant of the mill-owned house was the company store and truck-payment system. In this system the employee received his wages in the form of orders on the company store or the store account was simply marked off against wages due. The most common method was to have both the payroll books and the store accounts kept by the same person with the amounts on both sides frequently balancing one another.<sup>6</sup>

On one occasion, [in 1875] a strike took place in one of the factory towns in Connecticut and it was found that a very large number of the operatives were actually in debt to the corporation and there was a very considerable number of families who had not drawn a dollar in money for months together, the store account always being equal to the pay-roll. If they wanted a railroad ticket in order to go to the next town they had to get it in the [mill] office, and sometimes be asked why they wanted to go; even pew rent was deducted from their wages.<sup>7</sup>

This system of tying the employee to the mill by his debt to the company store was facilitated by the long payment period for wages which prevailed until the mid-nineties. The usual pay period was monthly up to 1876 when the unions in Fall River, Mass., succeeded in getting some of the mills of that city to pay weekly, and by 1882 the majority of the Fall River mills were on this basis.<sup>8</sup> Though two strikes in Connecticut on this issue were unsuccessful,<sup>9</sup> the change to a weekly pay period continued to make progress, aided by state laws. By 1900, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut required the payment of wages weekly, not later than six to nine days after the end of the week, and Maine required payment at least fortnightly<sup>10</sup> until 1913 when a weekly payment period became law.<sup>11</sup> By 1900 the weekly pay period was customary in the cotton mills of New England,<sup>12</sup> though some mills continued to pay fortnightly in spite of state laws.<sup>13</sup>

The mill house and the company store provided a fertile field for abuse. The operatives in mills which had company stores were commonly expected to trade there; and although it was said that there was no direct compulsion, most of the workers found it convenient or expedient to do so.<sup>14</sup> Compared to the earnings of operatives who could trade elsewhere, the real earnings of the operatives who had to use company stores were reduced by the higher prices of the company store; and to the ignorant and the immigrant the store accounting system was a confusing affair. One state passed a law to keep company stores from overcharging, but probably with little effect.<sup>15</sup>

It was common practice to insist on the use of the mill house as a condition of employment,<sup>16</sup> and this was especially the case when the mill house was inferior to available outside homes.<sup>17</sup> Cases have been recorded of mills deducting boardinghouse rent from the pay of young men and women who lived with their parents.<sup>18</sup> Where a mill had sufficient accommodations for only part of its employees, those who lived outside the mill houses were the first to be dismissed when the work slackened.<sup>19</sup> The net result of all these practices was that

where the mill had a vacancy in any of its houses, the applicant for work had to take the tenement if he was to get the job, while if there were no vacancies he could live where he pleased.<sup>20</sup>

The mill house and the company store were potent weapons in industrial conflicts. The worker who lived in a mill house and traded in a company store found when a strike came that he was likely to be evicted from the mill house and his credit cut off at the company store. It was early noted that those who dwelt outside the mill houses felt a greater independence to work or stop working as they pleased, and this had some effect on unionism in the industry.<sup>21</sup>

By 1900 the company store and the mill house were, for a variety of reasons, declining in importance in the New England section of the industry. The mill owners were slowly shedding the paternalism which had been so marked in the early days of cotton manufacturing in this country. More and more the mill managements were concentrating on production, and were leaving housing to the real estate operators and merchandising to the merchants.<sup>22</sup> By 1879, in a New England town of 50,000, the mills owned few tenements.<sup>23</sup> The industry was growing, but the proportion of employees who lived in mill houses was declining because enough new houses were not built by the mills to house the new workers. The mills did not try to furnish houses for all their help and were gradually disposing of their tenements. In Fall River, Mass., about 1900, approximately 50 per cent of the mill workers lived in mill tenements,<sup>24</sup> and since this city was noted for the extent of its mill housing, the percentage living in mill houses in the rest of New England around the turn of the century must certainly have been less than the Fall River figure. A 1916 survey of mill housing showed that two-thirds of the mill houses studied were built before 1910.<sup>25</sup> Only in the relatively isolated towns of New England was it necessary for the mill to continue to provide the housing facilities for its employees.

After 1900 mill housing and company stores continued to decline in importance. In 1908 only 28 per cent of the New England mill families were living in mill-owned houses.<sup>26</sup> At the end of the first decade of the present century both these characteristic features of the early development of the industry were well on the way to extinction, with the company store usually the first to go.<sup>27</sup> Practically the only remnants of paternalism and welfare work were hospitalization at reduced costs, some recreational facilities, and an occasional profit-sharing scheme.<sup>28</sup> Only a very small percentage of the New England mills sponsored any welfare work at all,<sup>29</sup> while the most common practice

among those which did anything appeared to be the carrying of life insurance policies for their employees and sometimes a contributory system of cash sickness benefits.<sup>30</sup> A few mills attempted to encourage homeownership among the workers by selling them land or houses, but less than 7 per cent of the operatives were homeowners about 1910.<sup>31</sup> A survey in 1916 of New England mills which housed any of their employees disclosed that less than 20 per cent of the workers lived in these mill houses.<sup>32</sup> A complete listing of all the 187 cotton mills in Massachusetts in 1924 showed that only 62 owned any houses at all and 22 per cent of the employees of these house-owning mills rented their houses from the mill. As was to be expected, the percentage of employees housed by the mill varied inversely with the size of the town in which the mill was located.<sup>33</sup>

In 1938 the author made a survey of New England cotton mills employing a total of more than 50,000 workers. At this time, mills with just over 17,000 employees had more or less of housing facilities, and 28.4 per cent of these 17,000 workers lived in houses rented from the mill. These workers paid an average rental of 43.1 cents per room per week, compared to the 39.7 cents collected in the mills surveyed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 1934<sup>34</sup> and the 34 cents paid in 1916.<sup>35</sup> The gradualness of the decline in the ownership of houses by the mills is shown by the fact that 17 of the mills visited by this author did not finally dispose of all their houses until within the last 15 years and 13 of these 17 did not make final disposal until after 1933. Only one company store was discovered, and this was in a rather isolated mill town in Connecticut. Some half dozen of the mills subsidized some form of recreational activities and seven mills had group life insurance plans. This was a decline from the number reporting group insurance plans in 1934.<sup>36</sup> In most of these plans both the mill and the worker shared the cost. Very few mills have ever had any pension plans or disability funds.<sup>37</sup> By 1932, the few profit-sharing plans in New England had been discontinued—one of them having been in operation from 1889 to 1928.<sup>38</sup>

The first mills built in New England near the sources of water power were forced by their isolation to erect complete villages as a prerequisite to mill operation. As population grew and mill villages developed into sizable towns and cities, real estate operators began to take over the job of providing housing facilities on a simple landlord-tenant basis and company stores were replaced by those of local merchants. The shift away from company stores was facilitated by the change in the wage payment period from monthly and fortnightly to

a weekly basis. To an increasing extent the mill owners sought to divest themselves of the responsibilities which the paternalism of mill housing and company stores entailed. The operatives, in turn, preferred not to be obligated to the employer beyond the necessities of their relationship within the mill during the working day. Nevertheless, mills in isolated localities found mill housing imperative past the first decade of the present century. At the present time relatively few employees live in mill-owned houses. About 90 per cent of the workers live in houses owned by private operators. Those mills which still own houses are mostly in the smaller towns away from the main mill centers, and all but a few of them are ready to sell their holdings whenever a favorable opportunity presents itself. Some of the mills today sponsor recreational activities and have group insurance plans, but there has never been much in the way of formalized all-embracing welfare programs and it is unlikely that such will be undertaken in the future.

The New England mill village passed its peak of development shortly after the Civil War, so that the greater part of its history lies outside the scope of this volume. Today there is little left of the New England mill village. Places like New Bedford are no different from other manufacturing cities—row after row of workers' houses on paved streets, interspersed with mill buildings four or five stories high whose tall narrow windows and weatherbeaten bricks bespeak their age. Still nestling in some of the more isolated valleys off the main road, however, one can still see what the old New England mill village looked like—the mill close by the stream, opposite there are the rows of houses from which the mill's workers converge each morning on the mill gate only to disperse again each evening, and centrally located there is the store building. But these are appearances only, for the stream's power is now replaced by the electric power lines whose steel carriers can be seen above the trees, the houses are now owned by real estate operators instead of by the mill, the store building has been taken over by an independent merchant or a chain outfit—and real cash goes over the counter instead of tokens or scrip.

The full story of the mill village in the era since 1900 lies in the South, the dominant section of the industry today.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER

<sup>1</sup> *Labor and Capital* 1885, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 60-65.

<sup>2</sup> L. B. C. Wyman, "Among the Women," *Atlantic Monthly*, September, 1888, p. 315.

<sup>3</sup> C. B. Spahr, "The Factory Towns in New England," *The Outlook*, February, 1899, pp. 288-9.

<sup>4</sup> *Labor and Capital 1885, op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 29.

<sup>5</sup> *Report on Condition of Women and Child Wage-Earners in the United States*, 61st Congress, 2d Session, Senate, Document No. 645, 1910-1913 (19 volumes), Vol. I, *Cotton Textile Industry*, p. 520. (Hereinafter cited as Senate Document 645.)

<sup>6</sup> George Gunton, *Factory Conditions in the South*, The Gunton Co., New York, 1899, p. 349.

<sup>7</sup> "Factory Labor in the South," *Gunton's Magazine*, April, 1898, p. 225.

<sup>8</sup> George McNeill (ed.), *The Labor Movement*, M. W. Hazen Co., New York, 1887, pp. 225, 233.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Labor, *Third Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor*, 1887, *Strikes and Lockouts 1881-1886*, pp. 66-69; *Tenth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor*, 1896, *Strikes and Lockouts 1887-1894*, pp. 90-93.

<sup>10</sup> F. J. Stimson, *Handbook to the Labor Law of the United States*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1896, pp. 87-88.

<sup>11</sup> Maine, *Acts and Resolves as Passed by the Legislature*, 1911, ch. 39, 1913, ch. 26.

<sup>12</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, Digest, p. 33, Vol. XIV, pp. 558-9; *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, 61st Congress, 2d Session, Senate, Document No. 633, 1911 (42 volumes), Vol. 10, *Immigrants in Industries*, Part 3, *Cotton Goods Manufacturing in the North Atlantic States*, p. 118. (Hereinafter cited as Senate Document 633.)

<sup>13</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 350.

<sup>14</sup> "People of a New England Factory Village," *Atlantic Monthly*, October, 1880, p. 463.

<sup>15</sup> Connecticut, *General Statutes*, 1902, sec. 4700.

<sup>16</sup> *Labor and Capital 1885, op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 60-65.

<sup>17</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, Digest, p. 35.

<sup>18</sup> *People of a New England Factory Village, op. cit.*, p. 463.

<sup>19</sup> *The Old Factory Towns in New England, op. cit.*, p. 289.

<sup>20</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 220.

<sup>21</sup> *The Old Factory Towns in New England, op. cit.*, p. 289.

<sup>22</sup> Herbert J. Burgy, *The New England Cotton Textile Industry*, Waverly Press, Baltimore, 1932, p. 155; Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 72, Vol. XIV, pp. 558-9; L. B. C. Wyman, "Companions of the Cotton Loom," *The Chautauquan*, February, 1894, p. 603.

<sup>23</sup> "Study of a New England Factory Town," *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1879, p. 692.

<sup>24</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, Digest, p. 35, Vol. VII, pp. 219-21, 225, Vol. XIII, pp. 349-50, Vol. XIV, p. 566.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Housing by Employers in the United States*, Bulletin, No. 263, Washington, 1920, p. 129.

<sup>26</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 520.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. XIV, *Family Budgets of Typical Cotton-Mill Workers*, pp. 175, 181; Senate Document 633, *op. cit.*, Vol. 10, Part 3, p. 275; Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. XIV, p. 559; Massachusetts, Bureau of Statistics of Labor, *Massachusetts Labor Bulletin*, May, 1906, pp. 196-9.

<sup>28</sup> Senate Document 633, *op. cit.*, Vol. 10, Part 3, p. 275; Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. XIV, pp. 558-9; *Massachusetts Labor Bulletin, op. cit.*, May, 1906, pp. 196-9.

<sup>29</sup> *Monthly Labor Review, op. cit.*, February, 1917, p. 315ff.

<sup>30</sup> National Industrial Conference Board, *The Cost of Living Among Wage-Earners*, Research Report #22, November, 1919, p. 10.

<sup>31</sup> Senate Document 633, *op. cit.*, Vol. 10, Part 3, p. 180; *Monthly Labor Review, op. cit.*, April, 1919, p. 227; Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 263, *op. cit.*, p. 205; Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 220-1.

<sup>32</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 263, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> *Monthly Labor Review*, *op. cit.*, August, 1924, pp. 163-4.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, June, 1936, pp. 1492-5.

<sup>35</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 263, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

<sup>36</sup> *Monthly Labor Review*, *op. cit.*, June, 1936, pp. 1490-1.

<sup>37</sup> National Industrial Conference Board, *Industrial Pensions in the United States*, New York, 1925, pp. 6-7, 143; Murray Webb Latimer, *Industrial Pension Systems* (two volumes), Industrial Relations Counselors, Inc., New York, 1932, Vol. II, pp. 1086, 1099; *Monthly Labor Review*, *op. cit.*, December, 1916, p. 825ff.

<sup>38</sup> C. Canby Balderston, *Profit Sharing for Wage Earners*, Industrial Relations Counselors, Inc., New York, 1937, pp. 86-131; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Profit Sharing in the United States*, Bulletin No. 208, Washington, 1917, p. 10.

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## 4 *THE SOUTHERN MILL VILLAGE*

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FEW ASPECTS of this industry have come under such close scrutiny and have been the subject of as much discussion as the mill villages of the South. For every attack there has been an equally vigorous defense—and little wonder, for there is sufficient diversity to make any unqualified description the butt of criticism from those who take a different view. Those who unhesitatingly condemn the mill village and portray it in darkest tones have frequently seen but one or two villages, and these in times of strife or labor conflict. Those who defend the mill village are likewise prone to display only the best of things. One can easily recall in memory the villages with drab and broken-down houses, lacking in every essential of modern comfort, where the women of the village, many with babies in their arms, lug pails of water from the solitary tap which sticks up from the bare ground to serve every four or five houses; nor need one be blessed with great intelligence to realize that the small shack behind each weather-beaten house does not contain a modern tiled bathroom with gleaming chromium-plated fixtures. Yet it is only a few minutes ride from here by automobile to a mill village which has all the appearances of a well-to-do suburban community—neat brick cottages with every modern convenience, well kept lawns, paved roadways and walks, and an atmosphere of comfortable orderliness which would gratify the heart of the most ardent advocate of town planning.

The mill village system of the South had its roots in the conditions under which the mills were first built. As in early New England, the most desirable mill sites were not the cities of the region, but the riverbanks of the Appalachian plateau. The gathering and retention of a labor supply in this sparsely peopled farm area was an important phase of the development of the mills. The establishment of cotton manufacturing meant the erection not only of the mill itself, but of a complete community as well. The mill owner was the only one financially able and willing to provide the necessary facilities for living. While the New England mill village was declining in importance



before the opening of the twentieth century, in the South the industry was growing rapidly and village after village was springing up or being enlarged to meet the housing and living needs of the new operatives.

Up to a point the story of the mill village in New England and the South is the same in both regions. The separation comes in the period of decline of the mill village of New England—for in New England the mill village is unimportant today while in the South the decline has only just begun and may never be as complete as in New England. The demise of the mill village system in New England was the result of the growth of population in the mill centers, the willingness of private real estate operators to compete with the mills in offering housing accommodations to the mill workers and the readiness of the mill owners to withdraw from all activities and responsibilities beyond that of manufacturing itself. In the South, on the other hand, though population in the mill centers has grown, and urbanization in the area as a whole has increased greatly since 1900, the mills themselves are mainly located in relatively sparsely populated localities. In 1930 one-third of the cotton mill workers of New England were found in the principal cities of industrial areas, another fourth were in the periphery of such areas, and still another fourth were in important industrial counties. In the South at the same time more than two-thirds of the cotton mill workers were employed in counties which were otherwise nonindustrial, and the rest were in industrial counties which still had no city of 100,000 or more.<sup>1</sup> Thus the conditions which made the mill village a necessity in the early days of the industry in the South to a large extent persist today.

Information showing the proportion of employees who lived in mill houses before 1900 is fragmentary. From general descriptive material and from what is known of the conditions under which the early mills developed, it is certain that a large majority of the mill workers lived in houses owned by their employers. Toward the end of the first decade of the present century a survey of over 1,500 mill families showed that 87 per cent of these families lived in mill houses.<sup>2</sup> Data for later years show a decline from this figure. In 1916 the BLS studied 48 Southern mills, all of which had more or less of a mill village, and found that 71 per cent of the employees lived in mill houses,<sup>3</sup> while two surveys in the mid-twenties in North Carolina placed the proportion at about 70 per cent<sup>4</sup> and about 78 per cent.<sup>5</sup> A further study by the BLS in 1934 found that 79 per cent of the employees in 20 Southern mills lived in mill houses.<sup>6</sup>

In the summer and fall of 1938 this author made a survey of mills employing a total of close to 195,000 workers in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama and secured from the mill officials estimates on the proportion of employees housed and other data relating to housing conditions. Tabulation disclosed that just under two-thirds of the employees were living in houses owned by the mill. Though some of the variations in the data are undoubtedly due to differences in the sample, there is no mistaking the general trend. Since 1900 the Southern cotton mills have, for a variety of reasons, been housing a declining proportion of their employees. The decline, however, has been a slow one. Today, even with recent sales of houses by mills, certainly over 60 per cent of the Southern cotton mill workers live in mill-owned houses.

The degree of homeownership among the Southern cotton mill families has always been small. About 1910 less than 5 per cent of them owned their homes,<sup>7</sup> and a mid-twenties survey showed just over 12 per cent of the houses in five mill communities to be operative-owned.<sup>8</sup> The mill workers have not displayed very much interest in homeownership for more than one reason. First among these was the plain economic fact that the building or purchasing of a home required a long period of saving out of an already inadequate family income, and perhaps more important, the mill houses could be rented at less than the cost of maintaining a privately-owned house. Mill house rents have always been predominantly nominal rents. Some mills, but not many, followed the practice of charging no rent at all—the house went with the job.<sup>9</sup> In a study made toward the end of the first decade of the present century some 8 per cent of the mill families covered lived rent-free in mill-owned houses<sup>10</sup> and even today there are a few instances of rent-free mill houses.

In the early part of this century the rents of mill-owned houses (outside of the small number of rent-free houses) ran anywhere from 12½ cents to 25 cents per room per week—this would give the occupant of a four-room house (the most common size) a weekly rental bill of 50 cents to one dollar.<sup>11</sup> A survey by the BLS about 1916, showed that the average rental per room per week for over 40,000 rooms in Southern mill houses was 25 cents—which was one dollar per week for the usual four-room unit; the most common rentals being between 20 and 29 cents per room per week. Almost half the rooms were in this group, while one-quarter rented for 10 to 19 cents and about 23 per cent were in the 30-39 cents class.<sup>12</sup> The 1920 study by the National Industrial Conference Board in Charlotte, N.C., and

Greenville and Pelzer, S.C., gave about the same results,<sup>13</sup> indicating that up to 1920 the rents of mill-owned houses in the South had changed but little since the beginning of the century. During the twenties, however, the rents began to rise so that by 1934 the average rent per room per week for almost 70,000 rooms in mill houses was 31 cents. The 20-29 cents rent group remained the largest, but the 10-19 cents group which was prominent in 1916 had shrunk to less than 3 per cent of the total rooms while the proportion of rooms renting for more than 30 cents per week had greatly increased.<sup>14</sup> Between 1934 and 1938 there was no change in rentals and in 1938 the average operative living in a mill house paid 31 cents per room per week.<sup>15</sup> Since the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act became effective in 1938, there has been some evidence of rent increases.<sup>16</sup>

These rentals, it should be remembered, cover not only the house itself, but certain other facilities as well. It has been customary to include water without an additional charge in practically all mills. The 1916 survey of the BLS showed that in 46 of the 48 mills water was included in the rental<sup>17</sup> and a 1934 study of 126 mills by the same agency indicated that only two mills did not include water in the house rent.<sup>18</sup> The investigation made by this author in 1938 showed no change from this general practice. On the question of the supply of electricity there has been more variation. Evidence on facilities for lighting in mill houses in the first 15 years of this century is lacking, but in 1916 just over 41 per cent of the mill houses owned by 48 mills were equipped for lighting by electricity and in 17 of these 48 mills the electric current was included with the rent.<sup>19</sup> Mill houses at Greenville and Pelzer, S.C., and Charlotte, N.C., in 1920 included electricity in the rental charge.<sup>20</sup> Today practically every mill house is wired for electricity,<sup>21</sup> but the inclusion of electric current in the rental charge has been changing over the past decade. The increased use of radios, electric irons, and other electrical appliances so raised the consumption of electricity by the mill families that the mill owners have turned to charging for all or part of the current used. In the mid-twenties some mills started to curb the waste of current (for it was not uncommon to see lights left burning all night) by limiting the size of the bulbs used. Others required payment for electricity at a flat rate per week for each light used, while others included a specified amount of energy consumption with the rent and charged for use in excess of this amount.<sup>22</sup> A 1934 survey showed 56 per cent of the mills including all or some of the electric current in the rent,<sup>23</sup> but more exact data were secured by this author in 1938. In this year

35 per cent of the operatives living in mill houses secured all of their electric current as part of the rent, 28 per cent received a basic electric allowance as part of the rent and had to pay for any current consumed in excess of this allowance, and 37 per cent had to pay for all the electricity they used.

With these facilities of water and electricity even only partly included in the already low rents of the mill houses it is no wonder that the operatives have displayed little eagerness to become homeowners. Some mills have urged their employees to buy or build their own homes; they look upon homeownership as a means of reducing labor turnover and making "better employees" of the operatives,<sup>24</sup> and have helped the operatives to this end by selling them houses on easy payments.<sup>25</sup> On the whole, however, until recently comparatively few of the mills have had any definite policy on this matter. In the 1916 BLS survey of 48 Southern mills, none was listed as making any provision for the sale of houses to the operatives.<sup>26</sup> One of the conditions of the approval of the Cotton Textile Code by the President in 1933 was that the Code Authority in the industry submit a plan for eventual homeownership in the mill villages. With the President's approval, however, the Code Authority had this clause changed to read merely that they report on the question of plans for homeownership.<sup>27</sup> The Code Authority therefore did not submit any plans for facilitating homeownership, but reported after a survey by one of its members that the operatives were just not interested.<sup>28</sup>

This lack of interest is primarily due to the fact that mill house rents are largely nominal. Before the end of the First World War, when most of the houses were extremely simple in construction and appointments, it was possible for mills to cover their house costs and get a return on their investment.<sup>29</sup> The early mill villages knew little of streets and walks, running water was uncommon, the privy was almost universal in its presence as was the bathroom in its absence. What most often greeted the eye was row after row of drab-looking frame structures on piers clustered around the mill.<sup>30</sup> In 1907-8 over 90 per cent of the Southern mill families had privies as the only sanitary convenience.<sup>31</sup> As late as 1916 almost half the houses had no modern conveniences—no bath, no inside toilet, no sewerage system, no running water, and no electricity,<sup>32</sup> and in the same year about the same proportion of the villages received ratings of less than 50 per cent on their sanitary facilities.<sup>33</sup> Since this time, however, the mill houses have been greatly improved in facilities and appearance. Variety in construction and color relieved the former monotony. At least one

state passed a law which made sewerage systems for mill houses compulsory, though unfortunately many exceptions were permissible.<sup>34</sup> By the mid-twenties well over 90 per cent were wired for electricity, over 80 per cent had running water, 70 per cent had inside toilets, and the number equipped with baths was steadily increasing.<sup>35</sup> Modern conveniences were everywhere becoming more and more common.<sup>36</sup> By 1938, when this author toured the Southern mill sections, the mill house which did not have electricity, inside toilets, and running water was by far the exception rather than the rule. With these improvements in facilities and construction the mill owner has been faced with increasing costs of house maintenance while rents have not risen in proportion. Housing by the mills today is mainly a losing proposition financially<sup>37</sup> though there are mills which do profit on their housing facilities.<sup>38</sup>

The mill worker who lives outside the mill house suffers financially in comparison with his fellow workers who rent mill houses.<sup>39</sup> If the worker owns his home, his maintenance and operation costs are larger than the rent he would pay for a mill house; if he rents from an outsider his rental will be more than the mill house rent.<sup>40</sup> Yet there is no wage differential based on where the worker lives. To the mill, the extra cost of travel and higher housing costs of those who live outside the mill village are a concern of the worker alone. A few mills which employ a large number of workers who live outside the mill village have had requests for bonuses from these workers so that they would be as well off as those who live in the village. Some of the workers who own homes near the mill village have demanded that the mill buy or lease their house and then rent it back to them at the same nominal rates as the houses already owned by the mill—and mills have done this.<sup>41</sup> Not only do the workers who live outside the mill village lose money by the ordinary difference between their costs and the low mill house rentals, but their loss is magnified whenever they work short-time or are unemployed for any reason. For it has long been the custom to defer or cancel the mill house rents in the case of unemployment or mill shutdowns.<sup>42</sup> The details of this practice, of course, vary from mill to mill, but almost universally there is no house charge when the mill shuts down for any length of time,<sup>43</sup> while sickness or unemployment either cancels the entire charge or reduces the charge and defers the payment until the employee returns to work. Some mills even have definite schedules of payment based on the proportion of full-time hours which the employee works. Several cancel the rent when the operative works

less than three days in the week, and one large company makes its house charge dependent on the number of days worked—the operative who works three days pays  $\frac{3}{5}$  of the charge, if he works one day he pays  $\frac{1}{5}$ , etc.<sup>44</sup> This practice serves to keep the work force intact pending full-time operations. Recently South Carolina has taken action to protect the workers in the cases where mills, for one reason or another, do not choose to defer or cancel the rent in periods of unemployment or shutdowns. In 1933 a South Carolina law became effective providing that mills which own and furnish dwellings to their operatives may not charge house rent or for water or electric services when the mill closes down for more than two weeks,<sup>45</sup> while in 1938 it was provided that in the case of workers who, through no fault of their own, fall behind in their mill house rent payments because of slack work, sickness, etc., the mill may not apply more than half of the future weekly earnings to the retirement of the debt.<sup>46</sup> The act intended that the debt should be retired in installments and prevent the deprivation which would occur should the operatives' full pay be withheld for payment of house charges.

That the mill worker who lives outside the mill village loses money is further evident from the fact that there is usually a waiting list for the mill houses. No sooner is a mill house vacated than a worker from outside the village moves in. If the former outsider was a renter the shift is easy, but if he was an owner he will sell his house or rent it pending sale. The outsider who owns his house is at an even greater disadvantage than the worker who rents outside the mill village. The homeowner not only loses money, but he loses his employment mobility as well. In an area like the Southern mill regions where there are usually comparatively few opportunities for employment outside the mills, and where a single mill is most frequently the sole source of industrial employment in the town, this loss of mobility is a serious matter. Protracted unemployment may mean the loss of the home for back taxes or mortgage money, while the renting worker has his house expense canceled or deferred by the mill, or simply moves relatively unencumbered in search of employment elsewhere. Homeownership not only makes the worker more vulnerable to economic disturbances, but in his everyday employment he is constrained to accept whatever employment conditions the local mill proffers. Thus, in connection with the current efforts of Southern mills to dispose of their villages in their entirety by selling the houses to the operatives or to outsiders if the operatives pass up the first chance which the mill gives them, the Textile Workers Union of America

(C.I.O.) is advising the workers not to purchase the houses. The union recommends that wherever it is not possible for the worker to continue to rent from the mill, he should rent from the new owner of the house.<sup>47</sup> Failing this, the T.W.U.A. has successfully fought for modifications of the sale terms to ease the burden on the workers.<sup>48</sup>

If this be the situation of the mill worker today—what has been the attitude of the mills in the past and at present? It is only very recently that the mills have thought of the mill village as a problem. In the early days of the industry in the South, the mill house was as much a necessity to cotton manufacturing as the mill itself and very few of the mill owners looked ahead to anything different. The mill village served him well both as a means of gathering and retaining his labor force and, through house evictions and mill store credit, as a powerful factor of control in industrial relations.

With the beginning of the First World War the industry entered a new period of heightened activity. The extended use of the double shift led, in many cases, to extremely crowded housing conditions while the abnormal demand for labor in all lines meant that it was difficult to erect the needed houses with any dispatch. The mills naturally turned, in every possible instance, to the use of mill hands who did not live in mill houses. By the postwar period the mills realized that, due to a combination of factors, it was no longer necessary for every mill to strive to provide housing accommodations for all of its operatives. The first of these factors was the growth of population in and around the mill centers, and the second was the increased mobility of the mill population consequent upon the cheapening of the automobile and especially the appearance of a vigorous trade in used cars. The first factor meant that a potential labor supply was being created in the vicinity of the mills. But the building of mills deeper in the Appalachians in the twenties showed that, for the industry as a whole, the increased supply of labor was more than being taken up by the expansion of the industry. The saving factor for the already established mills was increased mobility—it became not uncommon for workers to come to the mill from homes as much as fifteen miles away. This saved the mill the expense of housing them.

It is within the past few years that, for the first time, mill housing has entered a new phase—that of active questioning and inquiry into its place, value, and function. Several developments have acted to bring this about. The traditional wage differential which gave the South its greatest advantage in the regional competition within the industry has been greatly narrowed by both the minima of the NIRA code

and the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act and the advance of unionism in the South. All this has meant that, even though the New England and Southern sections of the industry are now mostly noncompetitive, the Southern mill owner has tended to look more carefully at any expenses additional to the purely industrial and business operations. Coincident with this narrowing of the wage differential came the impetus to unionization under the NRA and the NLRB. With his labor organized, the control and pressure which the employer was accustomed to exert through the ownership of the housing facilities has come to be of doubtful value, or at least of greatly lessened efficacy—thus removing a value which was previously considered as an offset to the cost of mill housing. The most obvious remedy for losses sustained by the mills on their housing facilities would be to raise the rents to the point where there would be a profit instead of a loss. But this would be hazardous because the workers consider this the equivalent of a wage cut.<sup>49</sup> Under the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, also, employers who furnish housing facilities for their workers may not charge more than a reasonable rental and, as the law is interpreted, profit is not included in the definition of "reasonable."<sup>50</sup> It is no wonder then that many Southern mill owners are asking, as the New England owners did a long time ago, whether it would not be better to confine their operations to manufacturing and selling cotton goods and leave everything else to the operatives or to specialists in the other lines of business.

It is not surprising, therefore, that many of the mill officials interviewed by this author in 1938 expressed a willingness to sell their entire villages. But between words and action in this matter there is a wide gap. For some mills, plant expansion still means building more houses. Peculiarities of individual mill location or labor supply have caused the erection of new houses by mills even within the past five years.<sup>51</sup> Aside from these cases, however, any mill which desires to dispose of the mill village has numerous problems. In the first place, the mill which wants to sell considers that the plan must be an all-or-nothing proposition—either the mill will sell all the houses or it will own all. To sell a house here and another there is looked upon as most undesirable. Thus even the mills which encourage homeownership do so by aiding the operative to buy or build elsewhere, but they do not sell them houses in the mill village.<sup>52</sup> Unless they plan to sell the entire village they mean to retain ownership of the entire village.<sup>53</sup> If the mill wants to sell the entire village, the attitude of the operatives must be taken into account. The operative realizes that



ownership will mean the loss of mobility, and that his customary plane of living will be infringed upon not only by the payments for the purchase but by the cost of operation, which will be higher than the mill house rents he has been accustomed to pay. One mill which sold all its houses many years ago had to repossess them within a short time because the operatives preferred the low rentals to the expense of ownership.<sup>54</sup> A few years ago a large company with several mills made inquiries among its operatives and found sentiment definitely against any plan for employee ownership, and several other mills which broached the question informally to their operatives have had similar experiences.<sup>55</sup>

The problem is further complicated by the location of many mills in unincorporated areas so that the municipal functions now assumed by the mill would ordinarily have to be passed on to the new homeowners through incorporation. If the village was not incorporated after the sale of the houses the new home owners would have nothing more than a plot and a house while the roads, streets, water supply, sewerage system, etc., would still be owned by the mill which had originally installed these facilities. This divided control would seem to be unsatisfactory, though one mill in an unincorporated area which has recently sold its houses followed this method.<sup>56</sup> The avoidance of incorporation is, of course, advantageous to the mill because incorporation might deprive the mill of control over expenditures for public improvements. With state and county taxes rising, the new subjection to municipal taxation (something the mills have been resisting for a long time, though losing the battle to an increasing degree in recent years) would hardly be welcome. Where the houses are close to the mill, there is also the natural reluctance to surrender control over land which may be needed for future plant expansion. Among the mill owners who maintain the better mill villages there is the fear that the houses will be allowed to deteriorate under individual ownership where the operative is unable or unwilling to spend as much as the mill did on maintenance.

In spite of these obstacles quite a few mills have sold their houses within the past few years. The number of mills which are at present in the process of disposal and those which are taking definite steps toward sale is constantly increasing,<sup>57</sup> though no exact figures are available. One concern which controls more than a half dozen large mills in the South has made mill house sale a definite company policy, but has left the details of the sale to be worked out by each mill on the basis of local conditions and needs.<sup>58</sup> Some mills located in or

near large cities have sold all the mill houses to real estate operators who are renting them to the operatives at much higher rentals.<sup>59</sup> The usual course, however, is for the houses to be put up for sale with the occupying operative given a definite period to make up his mind whether to purchase or take a chance on renting from the new owner.

To take an actual case for illustration we may consider a South Carolina mill which sold its houses in 1937.<sup>60</sup> The operative occupying each house was given first choice to purchase and had two months to decide whether or not he would buy the house, and most of them did exercise this first choice by buying. The average house was sold for \$200 per room, the better houses bringing up to \$250 per room. All the houses had electricity and inside flush toilets, the variation being in age, baths, and interior finish. All the houses were freshly painted before the sale. To the purchase price the mill added 6 per cent per annum interest on the unpaid balance each year, and an additional 1 per cent with which the mill pays the taxes and insurance until the house is all paid for, thus making a total of 7 per cent on the unpaid amount each year. The payments for the houses are being made on a weekly basis, and needless to say the weekly housing cost per family is now far above what it was when the houses were rented from the mill. When they were first sold it was expected that all the payments would be made within about six years, but because of slack work and a pay cut, the sale conditions have been relaxed and it will be longer before the operative pays up the full amount. To make the sale more attractive the mill agreed, voluntarily and solely upon its own option, to buy back the house of any operative who wished to move elsewhere. In these cases the mill will refund 85 per cent of the amount paid in, less the amount which would have been paid as rent since the date of the sale. So far only about half a dozen of the houses have had to be repossessed in this manner, and since there is a waiting list the houses were easily resold. The mill reports that the operatives are taking good care of the houses and the mill is aiding them in having necessary maintenance work done at a lower price than the individual operative could secure. So far the mill is satisfied with the results and does not think that the repurchase option will keep the management in the perpetual business of buying and selling houses. As for the operatives, the general manager of the mill reports that "about 65 per cent seem well pleased, 20 per cent are dissatisfied, and 15 per cent don't give a damn."

The company store had its origin, like the mill village and the mill house, in the isolation of the early mills. The mill, of necessity,

undertook the task of selling the things the mill workers had to have for the same reason that the mill supplied the housing. No one else was willing or financially able to assume this function, the success of which was completely dependent upon the success of the mill itself. The company store, though based on necessity, was financially advantageous to the mill, for the early mills frequently started with a shortage of working capital which the store helped to alleviate in several ways. With the company store the mill could, and did, combine a long pay period, the use of scrip in wage payment, and the system of setting off the worker's store account against the wages due. The net result was that the necessity of a frequent cash outlay for wages was avoided and working capital conserved. The store was, furthermore, a lucrative source of income<sup>61</sup> and one of the first strikes in the Southern section of the industry had among the grievances of the strikers the complaint that the company stores charged much more than those which were privately owned.<sup>62</sup>

The scrip payment system and the wage payment period were early subjects of state legislation. Before 1900 it was common for wages to be payable every two weeks and monthly,<sup>63</sup> and the Virginia law of 1887 only went so far as to require payment at least monthly.<sup>64</sup> The weekly pay period was becoming more and more popular in 1900-1914, even though not required by law.<sup>65</sup> Only South Carolina enacted a weekly pay law<sup>66</sup> while Virginia and Georgia never required that wages be paid more frequently than semimonthly.<sup>67</sup> In 1907-8 about one-third of the Southern operatives were being paid weekly.<sup>68</sup> By the time of the First World War the weekly pay period was common<sup>69</sup> though longer periods persisted in some cases until the middle twenties.<sup>70</sup> Concomitant with the legislative attack on the long pay period came regulations to govern the use of scrip in wage payment. In the 1870's and 1880's it was common for wages to be paid in some form of scrip or disk which circulated like currency in the neighborhood.<sup>71</sup> During the nineties and at the beginning of the present century the payment of wages in cash became more and more frequent.<sup>72</sup> Meanwhile the actions of the state legislatures resulted in a narrowing of the difference between scrip and cash payment by laws governing conditions of the redemption of token issues. The general intent of these laws was to make the scrip redeemable in cash, at the face value of the paper, either on demand or not later than a specified period after issuance.<sup>73</sup> At least one state cut right through the scrip system to require wage payment in cash or checks.<sup>74</sup>

Laws regulating the pay period and the media of wage payment

were a result of certain abuses which the combination of company store, scrip payment, and the long pay periods made possible. The use of scrip alone forced the operatives to make their purchases at the company store if they wanted to utilize the full face value of the paper, for outside the company store the scrip was redeemable for cash only at a discount.<sup>75</sup> In many cases, of course, the operative had no choice in any event, for there was no competition for the mill store. The practice of redeeming the scrip for cash, however, does indicate that there was some other place where the worker preferred to spend his money in many cases. Since the company store had a ready-made set of customers its prices were not on a competitive basis. Prices in the company store were governed by the conscience of the mill owner and the tolerance of the workers.<sup>76</sup> Where the scrip system practically forced the employee to trade at the company store, the long pay period even where cash was paid had the same effect—for the longer the period between paydays the more difficult the worker found it to bridge the gap between his needs and his purse.<sup>77</sup> At the company store his credit was good, for the simple reason that his store account was easily set off against wages due or still to be earned. After the passage of laws making scrip redeemable in cash, the plain factor of convenience, added to mill pressure, continued to bring the patronage of the operatives to the company store, though the attitude of the mill toward purchases outside the mill store varied.<sup>78</sup>

Actually the effect of these laws on pay periods and scrip payment is difficult to determine, for they largely became effective between 1900 and the end of the First World War—a period during which the conditions the laws were designed to control were in a state of transition. It is doubtful if the laws had much effect in hastening the more general adoption of the weekly cash pay period and in the decline of the company store, which will be discussed below. Aside from the restricted scope of some of the laws and unfavorable state court decisions,<sup>79</sup> there was no adequate enforcement machinery—and laws are not self-enforcing. Other factors than legislation were changing the pattern of company store, scrip, and long pay period which was common before 1900.

Certain disadvantages resulting from the operation of company stores led the mills at an early date to begin discarding this type of mill village activity. The company store never was as prevalent a feature of the mill village as mill housing. Whereas housing required a substantial investment, stores could be opened with relatively little capital. Furthermore, by tradition mill house rents were practically

unchangeable for long periods and were to a large degree nominal, while company store prices were always on an outright commercial basis. The fact that prices were unhampered by tradition, combined with the small capital involved, meant that the mill which wished to dispose of its store could do so without much difficulty. Similarly, a new mill could find a merchant willing to operate a store in the mill village if the mill itself was unwilling to experiment with store operation. A study of 322 textile mills of North Carolina in the mid-twenties disclosed that these mills never operated more than 63 company stores in their collective history, and in 1926 there were just 35 of these stores left.<sup>80</sup> It is interesting to note that of the 26 stores which were entirely given up by the mills, 10 were discarded before 1910, 11 in 1911-1920, and 5 in 1920-1926. In contrast, only one company store was started after 1920.<sup>81</sup> These figures indicate clearly that the company store began to decline in importance early in the present century. More and more mills found the company store unnecessary to their operations. In place of the company store a local merchant set up shop, most often in space leased from the mill, or the mill would contract with a Southern chain store organization which operates many such stores in mill villages. With the development of good roads in many parts of the South and the growth of near-by towns this trend has been accelerated. Company stores were rapidly going out of style in the twenties,<sup>82</sup> and in the summer of 1938 this author's survey of Southern cotton mills showed that just about 27 per cent of the workers were employed by mills which operated company stores—the rest of the workers were at mills which had no company store. In many cases in which the mill does not operate a store, however, the store is owned or controlled by persons affiliated with the mill management. Unfortunately little data on this point exists.<sup>83</sup>

A 1934 NRA committee reported in detail on how the remaining company stores of cotton mills operate. The stores' business was nearly all on a credit basis—over two-thirds of the stores made less than 20 per cent of their sales for cash and only 6 per cent of the stores did more than half their business in cash. The 1931-1934 annual loss from bad accounts was 1.3 per cent of sales, indicating that the credit extension was based on solid business considerations. The relative degree of isolation of the mill village and its effect on the position of the mill store as well as its necessity was shown by the fact that over 70 per cent of the stores had private competitors within one-half mile and almost 85 per cent within one mile. The parent mill issued scrip on payday for 35 per cent of the stores and it was common practice

for merchants and others in the community to discount this scrip for cash at 15-20 per cent and sometimes more. To get cash for things the company store did not supply—medicine, union dues, insurance, etc.—the workers without other cash would sell the scrip at a loss. Prices were slightly above those charged by independents. Compulsion on employees to trade at the company store was exceptional, though it did occur.<sup>84</sup>

With local merchants willing to take over the job of satisfying the needs of the operatives, the mill itself found ample reasons for sloughing off this extraneous activity. The company store provided a ready source of friction between the mill and the workers. There were complaints of overcharging almost from the beginning of the industry,<sup>85</sup> and the complaints have not abated so far as the remaining company stores are concerned.<sup>86</sup> The complaint of prices above those charged by independent stores is probably justified,<sup>87</sup> for the stores have been run as business and not philanthropic propositions.<sup>88</sup> Though the higher prices have been explained by some as due to the fact that the company stores render the service of credit and cannot be expected to charge cash store prices,<sup>89</sup> this would hardly assuage the feelings of the operative who believed he was being overcharged. With the increase of near-by competition from independent stores, as shown by the NRA Committee on Company Scrip, the comparison of prices by the operative has been facilitated so that this complaint could be expected to be quite accurately based. More recently the problem of company store prices has come up in connection with the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. It has been ruled that deductions for store accounts may be made only if the employer does not profit from the sales or if the profit does not reduce the wages below the legal minimum, and the validity of a charge for credit has been questioned.<sup>90</sup> The bad feeling caused by this question of store prices was one of the important reasons for mills giving up their stores.<sup>91</sup>

While the operative complained of higher prices at the company store, the practice of charging the store purchases off against the coming payday led many operatives into a debt which they could not see themselves ever clearing. For them the remedy was quite simple—the family just removed to another mill village and left the company store with the bad debt on its hands. In the discontinuance of company stores, this factor of bad debts was the most frequent reason given by the mills studied by Miss Herring in the mid-twenties.<sup>92</sup> The operatives did not seem to mind “beating the company” by moving. Even the independent store owners who extend credit to the

operatives have had this experience—especially in connection with the floating element among the mill workers.<sup>93</sup> The practice of deducting the store account from the pay envelope has itself met the opposition of the operatives and the workers of one mill struck successfully against this custom in 1932.<sup>94</sup>

The scrip system of wage payment is quite infrequent today<sup>95</sup> though it is not unknown at the mills which still operate company stores.<sup>96</sup> A remnant of the scrip system is frequently found, however, in scrip used for advance wages in both mills that have company stores and those which do not. Employees in need of supplies draw against their future pay by means of paper or metal scrip. If the employee wants cash this scrip is then sold to outsiders at a discount of anywhere up to 50 per cent, though 25 per cent seems the most common figure.<sup>97</sup> Although it has long been illegal in at least one state for such scrip to be acquired at less than the face value and the mill could refuse payment on this scrip,<sup>98</sup> this practice has continued.<sup>99</sup>

The company store and scrip system have met not only the opposition of the workers on the score of prices, debt, and store accounts, but the opposition of the local merchants as well. The NRA codes for retail trade, retail food and grocery trades, and retail jewelry trade carried provisions relating to scrip and wage deductions.<sup>100</sup> The provisions were as follows:

No retailer shall accept as payment for merchandise any nonnegotiable scrip . . . issued . . . in payment of wages or as an advance on unearned wages. A negotiable instrument . . . shall be accepted only if it is payable within 1 month of the date of issue.

No retailer shall extend credit . . . upon any employer's guaranty . . . of future wages, or pursuant to a wage deduction agreement . . . unless an identical guaranty or wage deduction arrangement is available to all retailers.<sup>101</sup>

The object of these provisions is clear. The independent retailers who had no wage deduction agreements with the mills wanted to break the hold of the favored store and the company store on the patronage of the employees by making the wage deduction agreement available to all and by making all scrip freely negotiable and redeemable. The operation of these provisions of the retail trade codes was stayed twice, however, pending the completion of the study by the NRA Committee on Company Scrip mentioned above,<sup>102</sup> and twice thereafter to give the National Industrial Recovery Board time to act

on the recommendations of the committee.<sup>103</sup> The NIRB passed the problem on to the NRA Advisory Council which on January 31, 1935, recommended<sup>104</sup> that instead of working through the retail codes, the problem be solved by amending each industry code to prohibit the use of scrip in wage payment and providing that no employee should be required to trade at a store as a requisite to employment. The NIRB accepted this advice and the application of retail trade code provisions were again stayed<sup>105</sup> and finally indefinitely postponed when the NIRB decided in April, 1935, not to secure the changes immediately, but as each industry code came up for revision.<sup>106</sup> Shortly thereafter the NIRA was invalidated. The so-called Ellenbogen Bill of 1936 to regulate the textile industry carried provisions calling for cash wage payments and prohibiting the employer from requiring the workers to trade at a specified store,<sup>107</sup> but the bill never got beyond the committee hearing stage.

The Southern mill village is more than just a matter of mill houses and company stores. It is more than an economic unit, for by necessity and intent it became a social and cultural unit as well. Working at the mill, living in a mill house, and buying at the mill store comprised the whole of the economic life of the worker and his family in the mill village—and within this mill village the family was expected to find all of its cultural and social life as well.

The Southern mill owner drew his labor from the impoverished farms and mountains of the area. In the period around 1880, when the Southern mills first started their phenomenal growth, Southern agriculture was unprofitable and the mill wages seemed very large—as they were, compared to the returns of the debt-ridden, cashless farm economy.<sup>108</sup> With the exception of brief periods of reversal such as that about the end of the first decade of the present century this relationship has always held—that the poverty of Southern agriculture has meant a vast reserve of labor which was accustomed to a sub-standard economic existence, which could be drawn upon by the mills whenever necessary, and the presence of which has been a force for low wages and low bargaining power for those already at work in the mills.<sup>109</sup> That the Southern tenant farmer and mountaineer improved his economic condition by coming to the mill there can be no doubt,<sup>110</sup> for practically any shift away from living on the land would have been for the better. But coming to the mill was more than an economic change, for equally important were the social and cultural effects of the change from the individual family life of the farm to the social and community controls of mill village life.<sup>111</sup>



The newcomers to the mill villages came not only from an impoverished rural background, but from one in which the rudiments of sanitation and progressive existence were almost unknown. Ex-mountaineers were likely to have lived in mud-floored and windowless cabins. The mill houses were superior to the shacks and cabins from which the new workers had moved and the employers encouraged cleanliness.<sup>112</sup> One of the effects of the ignorance of sanitary personal habits was the prevalence of hookworm disease among mill workers in the early years of the century. Although sanitary conditions in the mill villages were far from ideal, they were still much superior to those on the farms from which the mill hands had originally come. In all cases the mill officials had to educate the newcomers to sanitary personal habits, which often proved no easy task against the prejudice of the worker. Eventually, of course, this end was achieved and hookworm (which is intimately connected with sanitation) declined as the operatives became accustomed to the more civilized ways of the mill village. Complications remained, however, due to the more or less constant influx of farm families and the proximity of the mill to rural regions which were a source of contamination.<sup>113</sup>

The mill provided not only houses, stores, and an education in the civilized ways of life, but a wide variety of "welfare" activities as well. The earliest of these was the garden space in which the operative could augment his income by raising some vegetables. This fitted in with the traditional agricultural background of the workers and the abundance of cheap land in the mill areas. The gardens have always been simple affairs, usually producing corn and cabbage in the summer, and as an aid to the family budget were not very dependable.<sup>114</sup> There are no reliable data on the proportion of families which actually use the garden area available for them, but mill officials agree that in the past 15 or 20 years there has been a marked tendency to neglect the garden. The workers are coming to be more and more of mill village origin and the rural background of the family is fading. The younger people know little or nothing of even small farming and would rather use their leisure time for other things than "making" a vegetable garden.<sup>115</sup> Next to the garden plots, the most common facility provided has been a community house where the employees could gather for social purposes. At the present time over 70 per cent of the Southern employees are in mills having some kind of community building.<sup>116</sup> These range from unadorned barnlike affairs to elaborate modern buildings with varied recreational facilities and equipment. In some cases the use of the facilities is conditioned

on the payment of a small annual membership fee by the employee, but more usually the mill bears the entire expense. In other cases the local Y.M.C.A. is largely supported by the mill and serves the same functions as the community building. Another popular field is the subsidization of group athletics.<sup>117</sup> Over two-thirds of the mills studied in the mid-twenties aided a baseball team and many sponsored other sports as well.<sup>118</sup> A few mills gave financial aid to bands while still more helped the local Boy Scout troop meet the problems of leisure time for the young boys of the village.<sup>119</sup>

Of more recent origin have been pension plans, disability funds, group life insurance, health plans, and paid community workers. Disability benefit funds and pension plans have been the least frequent—very few mills doing anything in this line.<sup>120</sup> Much more popular have been group life insurance plans which started to develop rapidly during the period of the First World War.<sup>121</sup> Half of the cotton mills visited in the late twenties had such plans.<sup>122</sup> Of 129 mills studied by the BLS in 1934, over 55 per cent had group life insurance plans,<sup>123</sup> while a survey by this author in 1938 showed a further increase, with almost 65 per cent of the employees in mills having group insurance. At first the mills paid the cost of the insurance,<sup>124</sup> but this policy has changed and in this author's 1938 survey no mill bore the entire cost—in every case the employees shared the cost. Health insurance plans are still in the embryonic stages of development. In 1938 less than 10 per cent of the employees were in mills having health insurance plans.<sup>125</sup> But many more mills have informal health aids which put part of the responsibility and cost of medical service on the mills. Visiting nurses, health classes, company doctors, baby clinics, and co-operation with government agencies and insurance companies in health programs are some of the ways in which the mill aided, and in 1934 about one-third of the mills undertook one or more of these activities.<sup>126</sup> An ephemeral phase of the welfare work of the mills has been the paid community worker. Very few plants before 1914 had paid persons employed especially to supervise their welfare programs, but with the expansion of such programs during the First World War period, volunteer activities grew into formalized plans headed by mill-employed leaders. After the war a reaction took place and many of the elaborate welfare activity plans were abandoned or simplified and the full-time paid director was discarded or reduced to a part-time basis. Especially among the smaller mills, the mill-employed leader was displaced by new public employees who took over the direction of the health program, the classes in domestic science, and even the

club work.<sup>127</sup> In the mid-twenties less than one-quarter of the North Carolina mills had a paid community worker.<sup>128</sup> Since this time, the intervention of the depression beginning in 1929 and the subsequent development of governmental welfare programs have undoubtedly still further reduced the number of paid community workers maintained by the mills. Rarest among welfare activities has been the mill paper—only one or two mills venturing into this line.<sup>129</sup>

## NOTES TO CHAPTER

<sup>1</sup> Carter Goodrich and others, *Migration and Economic Opportunity*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1936, p. 377.

<sup>2</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 519-20.

<sup>3</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 263, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Jennings J. Rhyne, *Some Southern Cotton Mill Workers and Their Villages*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1930, p. 124.

<sup>5</sup> Harriet L. Herring, *Welfare Work in Mill Villages*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1929, pp. 220-2.

<sup>6</sup> *Monthly Labor Review*, *op. cit.*, June, 1936, pp. 1492-5.

<sup>7</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 519-20.

<sup>8</sup> Rhyne, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>9</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 493.

<sup>10</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 519-20; survey by this author.

<sup>11</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 493; Holland Thompson, *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill*, Macmillan Co., New York, 1906, p. 141; Gunton, *op. cit.*, p. 349; U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of Labor, *Housing of the Working People of the United States by Employers*, in *The Exhibit of the United States Bureau of Labor at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition*, Bulletin No. 54, Washington, 1904, pp. 1224-6.

<sup>12</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 263, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

<sup>13</sup> National Industrial Conference Board, *The Cost of Living Among Wage Earners*, Special Report #8, May, 1920, pp. 7-8.

<sup>14</sup> *Monthly Labor Review*, *op. cit.*, June, 1936, pp. 1492-5.

<sup>15</sup> Survey by this author.

<sup>16</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, *An Analysis of the Available Data Bearing on the Reasonable Cost of Furnishing Housing and Other Facilities to the Employees of the Piedmont Cotton Mills, Incorporated*, Washington, November, 1941, p. 2, *Data on Pay Roll Deductions, Union Manufacturing Company*, June, 1941, p. 21, *Conference in re Deductions in the Textile Manufacturing Industry* [transcripts of conferences held in August 1941 in Charlotte, N.C., Columbia, S.C., Atlanta, Ga., and Birmingham, Ala.], see transcript of Columbia conference, pp. 55, 64-65, 142.

<sup>17</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 263, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

<sup>18</sup> *Monthly Labor Review*, *op. cit.*, June, 1936, pp. 1492-5.

<sup>19</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 263, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

<sup>20</sup> Special Report #8, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>21</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31; Rhyne, *op. cit.*, p. 137; survey by this author.

<sup>22</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 264-5.

<sup>23</sup> *Monthly Labor Review*, *op. cit.*, June, 1936, pp. 1492-5.

<sup>24</sup> *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill*, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-40; Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 779; Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 270-3.

<sup>25</sup> South Carolina, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, Commerce, and Industry*, 1916, p. 13.

<sup>26</sup> *Monthly Labor Review*, *op. cit.*, April, 1919, p. 227.

<sup>27</sup> National Recovery Administration, Division of Review, *The Content of N.I.R.A. Administrative Legislation, Part F: A Type Case: The Cotton Textile Code*, Special Studies Section, Work Materials #35, February, 1936, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Phone conversation of author with Mr. Paul Halstead of the Cotton-Textile Institute, June 2, 1939.

<sup>29</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 573; Bureau of Labor, Bulletin No. 54, *op. cit.*, pp. 1224-6; Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 263, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-60.

<sup>30</sup> *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill*, *op. cit.*, p. 141; Melvin Thomas Cope-land, *The Cotton Manufacturing Industry of the United States*, Harvard University, Cambridge, 1912, p. 41.

<sup>31</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 526-7, 534.

<sup>32</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 263, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>33</sup> U.S. Treasury Department, Public Health Service, *Public Health Reports*, July 16, 1920, p. 1709.

<sup>34</sup> South Carolina, *Acts and Joint Resolutions of the General Assembly*, 1929, No. 249, *Code of 1932*, sec. 5042.

<sup>35</sup> Rhyne, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-7; Paul Blanshard, *Labor in Southern Cotton Mills*, The New Republic, Inc., New York, 1927, p. 46.

<sup>36</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31; Lois MacDonald, *Southern Mill Hills*, Alex L. Hillman, New York, 1928, p. 27; Abraham Berglund, George T. Starnes, Frank T. De Vyver, *Labor in the Industrial South*, Institute for Research in the Social Sciences, Institute Monograph No. 9, University of Virginia, 1930, pp. 117-9; Frank Traver De Vyver, "Southern Textile Mills Revisited," *Southern Economic Journal*, April, 1938, p. 469.

<sup>37</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 236-44; *Southern Textile Manufacturing*, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34; De Vyver, *op. cit.*, p. 470.

<sup>38</sup> *An Analysis of the Available Data Bearing on the Reasonable Cost of Furnishing Housing and Other Facilities to the Employees of the Piedmont Cotton Mills, Incorporated*, *op. cit.*, *passim*; *Data on Pay Roll Deductions, Union Manufacturing Company*, *op. cit.*, *passim*; *Conference in re Deductions in the Textile Manufacturing Industry*, *op. cit.*, *passim*; U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, press release, 1788, April 15, 1942.

<sup>39</sup> This is true whether or not the mill profits on its housing system. By mass operation, the mill can maintain the houses at a lower cost than can the individual homeowner.

<sup>40</sup> *Labor in the Industrial South*, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-9; Special Report #8, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-8; De Vyver, *op. cit.*, p. 470; *Conference in re Deductions in the Textile Manufacturing Industry*, *op. cit.*, Atlanta conference, pp. 24, 71-73, Columbia conference, p. 92.

<sup>41</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 275-6.

<sup>42</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 263, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

<sup>43</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 234-5.

<sup>44</sup> Survey by this author.

<sup>45</sup> South Carolina, *Acts*, *op. cit.*, 1933, No. 269.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 1938, No. 926.

<sup>47</sup> Interview with Solomon Barkin, Director of Research, of the T.W.U.A., C.I.O., December 13, 1939.

<sup>48</sup> Textile Workers Union of America, C.I.O., *Textile Labor*, August 1, 1941, p. 4, September 1, 1941, p. 11.

<sup>49</sup> De Vyver, *op. cit.*, p. 470; survey by this author.

<sup>50</sup> The Bureau of National Affairs, Inc., *Wage and Hour Manual*, 1940 Edition, Washington, D.C., 1940, p. 419.

<sup>51</sup> Textile Workers Organizing Committee, C.I.O., *Daily Progress Reports*, September 8, 1937; *Conference in re Deductions in the Textile Manufacturing Industry*, *op. cit.*, Columbia conference, pp. 23, 40; survey by this author.

- <sup>52</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 275-6.
- <sup>53</sup> Bureau of Labor, Bulletin No. 54, *op. cit.*, pp. 1224-6; U.S. Senate, Committee on Manufactures, *Hearings on S. Res. 49*, 71st Congress, 1st Session, Washington, 1929, p. 135; survey by this author.
- <sup>54</sup> Survey by this author.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>57</sup> *Conference in re Deductions in the Textile Manufacturing Industry, op. cit.*, Charlotte conference, pp. 46, 49, 54-55.
- <sup>58</sup> Survey by this author.
- <sup>59</sup> De Vyver, *op. cit.*, p. 470.
- <sup>60</sup> Survey by this author.
- <sup>61</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 779; Rhyne, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-24; Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-90; M. A. Potwin, *Cotton Mill People of the Piedmont*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1927, p. 111.
- <sup>62</sup> J. Dowd, "Strikes and Lockouts in North Carolina," *Gunton's Magazine*, February, 1901, pp. 139-40.
- <sup>63</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 493, 513; North Carolina, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor and Printing*, 1900, p. 62.
- <sup>64</sup> Virginia, *Acts of the General Assembly*, 1887, ch. 391, sec. 1-2.
- <sup>65</sup> North Carolina, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor and Printing*, 1906, p. 209, 1907, p. 199, 1908, p. 168, 1913, p. 106.
- <sup>66</sup> South Carolina, *Acts, op. cit.*, 1916, No. 546.
- <sup>67</sup> Virginia, *Acts, op. cit.*, 1912, ch. 106; Georgia, *Acts and Resolutions of the General Assembly*, 1919, No. 43.
- <sup>68</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 351.
- <sup>69</sup> North Carolina, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor and Printing*, 1916, p. 35.
- <sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 1925, *passim*, 1926, *passim*.
- <sup>71</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, 190-5.
- <sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 190-5; Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 493, 503, 513; *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill, op. cit.*, p. 153; North Carolina, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor and Printing*, 1900, p. 62.
- <sup>73</sup> Virginia, *Code of 1904*, sec. 3657d-3; South Carolina, *Code of 1902*, ch. 85, sec. 2719, *Acts, op. cit.*, 1914, No. 314, 1915, No. 44; Georgia, *Code of 1895*, sec. 1871. North Carolina, *Revision of 1905*, sec. 3730.
- <sup>74</sup> Georgia, *Acts, op. cit.*, 1919, No. 43.
- <sup>75</sup> Rhyne, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-4.
- <sup>76</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 779.
- <sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 779.
- <sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 550, 567.
- <sup>79</sup> 112 N.C. 164.
- <sup>80</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
- <sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 190-5.
- <sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30.
- <sup>83</sup> *Data on Pay Roll Deductions, Union Manufacturing Company, op. cit., passim.*
- <sup>84</sup> *Monthly Labor Review, op. cit.*, July, 1935, pp. 45-53.
- <sup>85</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 779; *Strikes and Lockouts in North Carolina, op. cit.*, pp. 139-40.
- <sup>86</sup> United Textile Workers of America, A.F. of L., *Textile Worker*, May, 1930, pp. 105-6; Tom Tippet, *When Southern Labor Stirs*, Jonathan Cape & Harrison Smith, New York, 1931, p. 205; U.S. House of Representatives, Subcommittee of the Committee on Labor, *Hearings on H.R. 9072*, 74th Congress, 2d Session, Washington, 1936, pp. 84-85, 275, 765.
- <sup>87</sup> National Recovery Administration, Committee on Company Scrip, *The Economic*

and *Social Implications of the Company Store and Scrip System*, revised edition of report, November 16, 1935, *passim*.

- <sup>88</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-90; *Labor in the Industrial South*, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-1.
- <sup>89</sup> *Labor in the Industrial South*, *op. cit.*, p. 127.
- <sup>90</sup> *Wage and Hour Manual*, 1940 Edition, *op. cit.*, p. 59.
- <sup>91</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 187-90.
- <sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 187-90.
- <sup>93</sup> Rhyne, *op. cit.*, pp. 207-8.
- <sup>94</sup> Labor Research Association, *Textile Notes*, October, 1932.
- <sup>95</sup> MacDonald, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
- <sup>96</sup> *Textile Worker*, *op. cit.*, May, 1930, pp. 103-4; *Hearings on H.R. 9072*, *op. cit.*, p. 765.
- <sup>97</sup> Committee on Company Scrip, *op. cit.*, *passim*; *Textile Worker*, *op. cit.*, May, 1930, pp. 103-4; National Labor Relations Board, press release, 1653, April 7, 1939.
- <sup>98</sup> South Carolina, *Acts*, *op. cit.*, 1915, No. 126, 1935, No. 60.
- <sup>99</sup> *Monthly Labor Review*, *op. cit.*, July, 1935, pp. 45-53; National Labor Relations Board, press release, 1653, April 7, 1939.
- <sup>100</sup> National Recovery Administration, press release, 3888, March 17, 1934.
- <sup>101</sup> Cited in *Monthly Labor Review*, *op. cit.*, May, 1934, p. 1059.
- <sup>102</sup> National Recovery Administration, press release, 2020, November 29, 1933, 5797, June 14, 1934.
- <sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 9026, November 29, 1934, 9497, January 4, 1935.
- <sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 9892, January 31, 1935.
- <sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 9966, February 5, 1935.
- <sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 11131, April 30, 1935.
- <sup>107</sup> *Hearings on H.R. 9072*, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-15, 21.
- <sup>108</sup> Holland Thompson, *The New South*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1919, pp. 1, 7, 9; Broadus Mitchell and George Sinclair Mitchell, *The Industrial Revolution in the South*, Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1930, p. 118; MacDonald, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.
- <sup>109</sup> Rupert B. Vance, *Human Geography of the South*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1935, second edition, p. 279; Mercer G. Evans, "Southern Labor Supply and Working Conditions in Industry," *The Annals*, January, 1931, p. 159; Jonathan Daniels, *A Southerner Discovers the South*, Macmillan Co., New York, 1938, p. 295.
- <sup>110</sup> *The Industrial Revolution in the South*, *op. cit.*, pp. 53, 123; MacDonald, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20; Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 482, 493, 498-9; Holland Thompson, "The Southern Textile Situation," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, April, 1930, pp. 114-6.
- <sup>111</sup> Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 160.
- <sup>112</sup> Copeland, *op. cit.*, p. 41; *The Industrial Revolution in the South*, *op. cit.*, p. 118.
- <sup>113</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. XVII, *Hookworm Disease Among Cotton Mill Operatives*, *passim*; D. L. Augustine, "Hookworm Disease in Cotton Mill Villages of Georgia and Alabama," *Journal of Industrial Hygiene*, September, 1926, *passim*.
- <sup>114</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 206-9; *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill*, *op. cit.*, p. 157.
- <sup>115</sup> Survey by this author.
- <sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>117</sup> *Monthly Labor Review*, *op. cit.*, June, 1936, pp. 1491-2.
- <sup>118</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-41.
- <sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 141-6.
- <sup>120</sup> *Monthly Labor Review*, *op. cit.*, December, 1916, p. 825ff.; Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 215-7; Laumer, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 1000; *Industrial Pensions in the United States*, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.
- <sup>121</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>122</sup> *Labor in the Industrial South, op. cit.*, pp. 105ff.

<sup>123</sup> *Monthly Labor Review, op. cit.*, June, 1936, pp. 1490-1.

<sup>124</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>125</sup> Survey by this author.

<sup>126</sup> *Monthly Labor Review, op. cit.*, June, 1936, pp. 1491-2; Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-76.

<sup>127</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 29, 118-23.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 123-4.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 212-13.

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## 5 RELIGION, EDUCATION, AND DEMOCRACY IN THE SOUTHERN MILL VILLAGE

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MILL ACTIVITIES in education and religion have played an important role in the social, economic, and cultural developments of the mill village. The church has long been a center of community social life, though the degree to which it has dominated these activities has varied with time and place. Every mill village has its church, and some have two or three. Practically every mill aids the church either by supplying the building or by paying a good part of the upkeep (which is mostly the preacher's salary) or both.<sup>1</sup> Though there are some mill village churches which are not dependent upon the mill's bounty, this is unusual. The mill furnishes not only the income of the church, but also leadership within church affairs. The mill management ranks may provide the Sunday-school superintendent and generally take the leading role in church activities.<sup>2</sup>

The influence of the church among the cotton mill workers depends upon the background of the workers, the type of activities undertaken by the church, and the development or lack of development of counter-attractions in the way of a social center. Where the employees were fresh from the farm, as was the case in the early mills, the church was most powerful.<sup>3</sup> But with the fading of the farm background it has been observed that the church has lost some of its hold, partly because families move from one village to another, and partly because village life itself assumes the social function of facilitating the meeting of friends, etc., which was fulfilled by the church in rural areas.<sup>4</sup> Also important in this connection have been the increase in sophistication among the workers and the development of other organizations to meet emotional needs, such as clubs of various sorts, athletics, and, to a certain degree, unions.<sup>5</sup> The extent of the decline in the influence of the church should not be overestimated, for experience varies in different mill villages according to local conditions, and in some cases the difference in church membership and attendance between the mill workers and tenants on farms is small.<sup>6</sup>



It is significant, however, that Sunday-school attendance is much less in evidence among the mill village dwellers than among tenant farmers,<sup>7</sup> and that the institutional<sup>8</sup> church attracts a larger proportion of the people to its ranks than the traditional church.<sup>9</sup> This indicates that the type of church is a factor in the influence it exerts, and that the church which confines itself to sermons and Sunday school may be in a process of retreat before the church with wider interests which can hold the younger folks.

On the side of economic and social problems the mill village church has always been heavily conservative even to a greater degree than churches elsewhere. Although a few exceptional persons within the church early advocated that the church bring its influence to bear to improve housing and living conditions in the mill villages, theirs were truly voices crying in the wilderness.<sup>10</sup> Primarily the mill village church program has been pointed toward keeping the status quo running smoothly with no social creed or concern over labor conditions, and the clergymen believe in and preach doctrines acceptable in the main to the employer.<sup>11</sup> Part of the decline in the influence of the church among the workers has been due to this indifference toward their problems—an indifference which pointed to the church as being of little use in the daily struggle for existence. Especially during times of conflict was this brought home sharply to the workers. In the wave of strikes in the Southern mills during 1929-30, the ministers played various roles—some helping and some opposing the strikers. In Marion, N.C., a minister became a deputy and was considered the strikers' worst enemy, and in this same town 16 church members were expelled for union membership and only reinstated after the intervention of the Federal Council of Churches.<sup>12</sup> A recent instance of the utilization of religious feelings in an attempt to defeat unionism is found in a mill subsidization of "preachers" and "prayer bands" whose chief theme was that C.I.O. stood for "Christ Is Out."<sup>13</sup>

That the attitude of the church may change is indicated by the fact that the 1929-30 strikes elicited resolutions from several district or state ecclesiastical units calling for reforms in mill labor conditions and higher wages, and the Federal Council of Churches and the Friends Service (Quakers) organized relief facilities for the strikers.<sup>14</sup> It is most significant, however, to note that all the ministers who helped the strikers were attached to churches which were not on mill land and not dependent on the mill for support in any way.<sup>15</sup> Since the strikers were helped only by ministers or church organizations which were independent of mill support, the implications are clear.

The mill village church will not be an independent force in the community unless and until it liberates itself from the necessity of relying on the mill management for financial aid. Until this happens, the mill village church will continue to be, as it has been in the past, little more than an adjunct to the employer—just one of the channels through which the employer has sought to make complete his hold on the workers.<sup>16</sup>

When the Southern cotton mills began their period of rapid development in the 1880's and for many years afterward, while the mills were expanding, the labor force was drawn from the impoverished and largely illiterate farmers of the region.<sup>17</sup> When the mill owner set up the mill village he provided not only the houses, stores and churches, but the schools as well. State finances were unequal to the task of building schools in all of the little mill villages which were springing up overnight, so the mill owner undertook this job in the hope that better help would be attracted and that eventually the working force itself would be the source of foremen and technical help.<sup>18</sup> In 1907-8 over 50 per cent of the Southern mills supported a day school in whole or in part while 22 per cent of the mills did likewise for a night school.<sup>19</sup> Most of these schools were of the small one-teacher type—and probably the teachers were not as good as in the schools in other towns of comparable size. Though the mill workers were themselves indifferent to education, and attendance was poor, by 1900 a large percentage of mill children had at least some schooling.<sup>20</sup> At least part of the blame for poor attendance rests on the mill owners, for investigators in 1907-8 reported:

Some of the mill owners visited in the South who build up schools for their employees often permit their superintendents to empty them. The school work of the child from 12 to 16 years of age is frequently interrupted by a hurry call from the mill superintendent.<sup>21</sup>

Though mill children in 1907-8 were illiterate to a much greater extent than children in the Southern mill states as a whole,<sup>21</sup> part of this difference was probably due to the fact that the mill children's education was retarded in relation to their age because of the absence of compulsory attendance laws. Children not in school had not permanently left school for it was common for parents to alternate their children between school and mill work,<sup>23</sup> so that attendance was frequently very irregular. Gradually the degree of illiteracy declined.<sup>24</sup> A study of North Carolina cotton mill workers in the mid-twenties showed that, whereas 12 per cent of the family heads were illiterate,

the unmarried persons were less than 6 per cent illiterate.<sup>25</sup> Another observer noted that about the time of the First World War more than half of those who joined the United Textile Workers had to "make their mark," but by the late twenties the great majority could write.<sup>26</sup>

But to the mill owner the school was more than just a way of reducing illiteracy and providing better workers. It was at the same time a vehicle, along with the church, designed to control the working force through conditioning the child who became the mill worker. In brief, the school was part and parcel of the all-encompassing mill village system. This meant that the mill village school was bounded by the ideas of the mill owner as to what type and how much education should be available for the children of mill workers who were expected almost invariably to become mill workers in their turn.

In general the mill village school has always had a longer school term than the schools in the country districts. By maintaining the school entirely or by adding to the available government funds, the mills have extended the school terms beyond the minimum legal requirements for all schools.<sup>27</sup> Though the mill schools often have a longer term than other schools, this appears to be the only aspect of education in which the mill schools are superior, for in all other respects the mill school is likely to be less favorable to educational advancement than other schools. Education beyond the level of literacy has not been of much interest to the mill owners.<sup>28</sup>

Dr. Cook's detailed study of North Carolina mill schools in the mid-twenties provides interesting material for comparison. For one thing, the compulsory attendance laws were not as well-enforced in mill schools as elsewhere. Over 20 per cent of the 13-year-olds in mill school districts were not enrolled, this being a much higher proportion of children illegally out of school than elsewhere.<sup>29</sup> This point on attendance was noted also by Thompson early in the present century, and by Hobbs in 1920.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the number of grades is limited and high school opportunities are fewer for mill school children generally in spite of the establishment of excellent high school facilities in some school districts controlled by mills. Of the 116 mill schools reporting in Cook's survey, 69 had less than eight grades of study, while only 36 had the full eleven grades which in North Carolina comprise a complete elementary and high school education. For those who attended the schools having less than eleven grades, attendance or completion of high school would have meant the payment of some tuition and in many cases transportation or board would have

had to be provided. Even rural children have a better opportunity for a high school education than children in a mill school with not more than nine grades. A larger percentage of rural children in North Carolina were enrolled in high school than were the children in mill school districts of this type. The mill child would have had a three times greater chance of a high school education if the father had stayed in the rural district rather than move to a mill village with only a seven-grade school.<sup>31</sup>

The comparative dearth of high school opportunities for the mill school children is illustrated by the fact that in the mid-twenties, although the average number of school terms completed by the unmarried workers was a fraction larger than the average for the married workers, the latter had a larger proportion with an eighth-grade or high school education. This was attributable to the fact that more of the married workers came from the farms where the winters could be utilized for school attendance while the unmarried workers who were reared in the mill village had to work in the mill.<sup>32</sup> The youth from the agricultural village is much more likely to be in high school or go beyond this than the mill village child.<sup>33</sup> In many cases mills actually or virtually a part of the cities which they border could easily give the mill children the advantage of attending the city schools and securing a high school education without tuition cost. But paying the city tax or the special-charter school district tax would cost more than the mill spends in subsidizing its own schools.<sup>34</sup>

The pressure for mill children to enter the mill at an early age in spite of laws even led to an increase in illiteracy in an important mill county of North Carolina just after the First World War.<sup>35</sup> Very few of the children even completed elementary school<sup>36</sup> and the great majority of children in mill families went to work as soon as possible. They dropped out of school to a greater extent than children of fathers in other occupational groups. In five North Carolina elementary schools, mill children constituted 65 per cent of the enrollment in the first grade but were less than 30 per cent of the enrollment in the seventh grade. The marked decline started in the fifth grade when increasing numbers became 14 years of age (the legal minimum age for work in North Carolina in the mid-twenties) and entered the mills. The average grade completed by all the workers studied by Rhyne in the mid-twenties was less than five and one-half grades,<sup>37</sup> and over half the children studied were retarded one or more years from the proper grade for their age. This was due partly to the indifference of the parents, for the majority of the children enter school

later than they should, but poorly trained teachers and inadequate school facilities also played a role.<sup>38</sup> A comparison of mill school children with other children showed that "the child of mill schools fall far below the standard in general intelligence."<sup>39</sup> But the mill children were less below the standard in arithmetic and reading achievement than they were in general. This indicates that the mill schools were not defective so much in the rudiments of literacy as they were in affecting the opportunity of the child to obtain general information beyond these rudiments.<sup>40</sup>

These deficiencies of the mill school system and the relative lack of opportunity for education beyond the elementary school level are a result of leaving the substantial control of education in the hands of the mill owners. Essentially the mill owner looked at the children as future mill workers and not as future citizens of a democracy. Reading, writing, arithmetic—little more was necessary. Of course there were individual variations in the attitude of the mill owners. Basically, however, anything beyond the elementary school level was considered a waste of time. The mill owner was interested in future mill workers and it is true that the majority of those who somehow did manage to finish high school did not enter the mill.<sup>41</sup> Consequently "the greater the degree of control by mill owners, the less likely are the schools to have a course of study beyond the seventh grade or any other advantages beyond the minimum legal requirements."<sup>42</sup> The control of the schools by the mill owners is part of their general control of community life under the mill village system. The school, along with the church, is a means of strengthening this control.

When the impoverished Southern farmer entered the mill village he stepped into a better material world than that to which he had been accustomed, but he did not step into a world of wider mental horizons. True, his children would learn to read and write where he might not have, but they could go little further. The mill village was a necessity of mill building and the paternalism of the early mill builders was a genuine concern for the welfare of employees new to the ways of industrial life. But the mill village was also a vehicle perfectly calculated from all angles to restrict the development of the workers into independent free-acting citizens. As the industry in the South became assured of financial success, the early paternalism became transformed into a deliberate tactical pose of the employer in which the restrictive aspects of the mill village system were brought to the

fore. It became a means of producing and assuring what the Southern employer liked to call "contented" workers.<sup>43</sup>

Every aspect of mill village life—houses, stores, welfare programs, churches, schools—was turned toward this end of assuring that the mill owner would not be annoyed by the presence of "discontented" workers. The mill village system proved a powerful deterrent to union membership and on one occasion, in 1930, workers were discharged for subscribing to a comparatively progressive newspaper.<sup>44</sup> With every aspect of economic and community life in the mill village controlled by the employer, the worker who protested against working conditions in the mill jeopardized the security not only of his job (as he would in any industry) but every other aspect of his economic and social life as well. Without ceremony he could be evicted from the company-owned house, and thus rendered *persona non grata* to all connected with the mill management. His credit at the company store could be cut off, the attendance of his children at the mill village school discontinued, his church membership terminated, and his very presence in the mill village forbidden.<sup>45</sup> In effect and in fact, he was exiled from that mill village as surely as any czar exiled the subjects who displeased him. Usually, however, the mill owner did not have to resort to the extremes detailed above. The knowledge of the power of the employer was usually sufficient to keep any adventurous workers in line.

The mill housing system and the unlimited power of eviction was used not only to keep the workers toeing the mark but to ensure an adequate supply of workers as well. The mill owner required that each house supply a certain quota of workers according to the size of the house, for the family and not the individual was the working unit. As a general rule this quota was set at one worker for each room in the house,<sup>46</sup> except that the three-room house need supply only two workers.<sup>47</sup> As might be expected, this rule frequently led to overcrowding,<sup>48</sup> was hardly conducive to decent housing conditions, and placed a premium on large families and child labor.<sup>49</sup> A circular issued by one Southern mill in soliciting workers, for example, stated that "we want families with at least three workers for the mill in each family."<sup>50</sup> The family which could not meet its quota was in danger of losing the mill house and its livelihood to a family which could meet the demands of the employer on this score. Since comparatively few houses were one-room affairs, this meant that more than one worker per family was a necessity.<sup>51</sup> Where a family initially met the quota, the discharge of one of the workers would put

the family below the quota and, since the mill wanted the house, the others would very likely be discharged even if their work was satisfactory.<sup>52</sup>

The tie-up between the mill housing system and the supply of workers was further strengthened by ensuring that the children entered the mill as soon as possible and that none would live in mill houses who worked outside the mill.<sup>53</sup> The pressure of the mill owner for the labor of the children, added to the economic necessity of the family, was also reinforced on occasion by a contract between the mill and the worker stipulating that the children of the family should enter the employment of the mill when they reached a certain age.<sup>54</sup> Young people who sought occupations outside the mill were even brought back into the fold by threats to discharge members of the family employed in the mill.<sup>55</sup>

Though the mill housing system provided the strongest single fulcrum of the employer's power outside the control of the job itself, the store, the church, and the school system helped, as we have noted above, in rounding out the employer's domination. Similarly with the host of miscellaneous welfare activities. These programs have been set up because the mills have seen in them an auxiliary to the older established controls.<sup>56</sup> The welfare program is, however, probably the weakest link in the system and in times of strife its elimination has been almost automatic.<sup>57</sup>

The closed system of living which the mill village imposed upon the operatives has produced a population socially and culturally distinct from the rest of the Southern social structure. The mill workers have been cut off from developing as free citizens in a democracy. Prevented from identifying themselves with the community at large by mill houses and stores, separate churches and schools, they became a separate class—a class which the rest of the community looked upon as inferior and whose welfare was no part of the community's concern. Through no fault of their own, but because of lack of education and because the paternalism of the mill village placed a premium on dependence and discouraged independence, the mill workers unfortunately accepted the stamp which had been placed upon them almost as clearly as the marking on the "untouchables" of India. Collectively, the mill population developed a sense of inferiority in relation to other groups who work and live away from the mill village.<sup>58</sup> With their opportunities for fruitful contacts outside the mill village so restricted, it is not surprising that the young boy or girl of the village seldom

marries outside the mill village, so that cotton mill work becomes almost a hereditary occupation.<sup>59</sup>

The inferiority complex which the workers have acquired under the overweening paternalism of the mill village system has in turn been used by the mill owners as a justification for the continuation of the system. The mill workers, they say, are like irresponsible children—they have to be cared for and the employer is the one best fitted for the job. But the irresponsibility of which the mill owner complains is the direct result of paternalism and welfare work—activities which destroy initiative and promote irresponsibility.<sup>60</sup> The paternalism which was a necessity of the early phase of the industry could only find eventual justification if by this means the people of the mill village were later enabled and encouraged to stand on their own feet, and by the same token it would have been progressively self-liquidating in character. The permanent paternalism of the mill owners has no such justification. When, in 1930, the employees of a Southern mill asked that welfare work be curtailed to avoid a wage cut, the mill officials refused the request with the answer that the workers were incompetent to spend their wages and should have welfare work instead.<sup>61</sup> This attitude is epitomized in the following colloquy between Senator Wheeler and Mr. A. W. Smith, president of the Brandon Corporation, one of the larger mill companies of the South:

Senator Wheeler. Are you opposed to collective bargaining?

Mr. Smith. Yes, sir; I am opposed to it.

Senator Wheeler. On what theory?

Mr. Smith. Because I think we can manage their affairs better than they.<sup>62</sup>

In the past decade or so, signs that the Southern mill worker is not entirely content with the sort of life that the mill owner has seen fit to supply in the mill village have been multiplying. In the past, the Southern mill family's only protest against conditions, aside from the infrequent periods of union activity, took the form of moving. The family would just pack its few belongings and move to another mill village in the hope of finding the other side of the hill on which the grass is always greener. This readiness to move has frequently been noted by students of the industry.<sup>63</sup> Nor have the operatives paid any attention to welfare work in this respect—for they move without regard to the welfare program and most of them feel that the money spent on these programs is rightfully due them anyway and they earn it as truly as they do their cash wages.<sup>64</sup> Moving is, of course, only a negative form of individual protest, but it does show



that the mill village was not an infallible producer of "contented" workers. Furthermore, in recent years the pressure available to the mill owner through the company house has diminished, partly because of the decline in the proportion of the workers housed. In fact some mills have sought to reinforce their power on this score by instituting regular leases for the houses which were formerly let on an informal basis.<sup>65</sup> The character of such leases is indicated by the clause in one of them which permits the mill to bar any but the mill hand and his family from entering the house.<sup>66</sup> At the same time the average size of the mill family has declined since the beginning of the century,<sup>67</sup> and the former quota which required that each room in the house supply a worker has necessarily gone by the board. Today, varying with local conditions, one worker can hold a house, though over the mill village as a whole the management expects to get from an average of one and one-half workers for the four-room houses to four workers from the six-room houses.<sup>68</sup> The smaller families made this readjustment necessary while the slower rate of growth of the mills has meant that the pressure for additional workers has been relaxed, at least for the time being. In some cases the mill officials even encourage younger people to seek work outside the mill village when it seems that the mill will not have a place ready for them. This is a contrast from the time when the mill took all the children as soon as possible and needed even more.

As a whole, the attitude of the mill workers has been changing under the influence of modern life. With the decrease in illiteracy, the prevalence of moviegoing, radios, and the union organizer, etc., the desire for better things has been greatly stimulated. The mill workers are getting further and further away from the agricultural background which once made them too easily satisfied with what the mill owner gave them. The union boom during and just after the First World War gave them a taste of independent action and the 1929-30 and 1934 strikes were perhaps the first signs of the awakening. The National Labor Relations Act, with its protection of the workers against antiunion discrimination, is helping the workers to help themselves, and for good or for ill they are grasping the opportunity. The strong fences which now surround so many mills may give way to indications of more democratic relations between employer and worker.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER

- <sup>1</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29; MacDonald, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29.
- <sup>2</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-29; *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill, op. cit.*, pp. 174-7.
- <sup>3</sup> *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill, op. cit.*, pp. 174-7.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.
- <sup>5</sup> Myra Page, *Southern Cotton Mills and Labor*, Workers Library Publishers, New York, 1929, pp. 50-51.
- <sup>6</sup> Rhyne, *op. cit.*, pp. 167-70.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 170-1.
- <sup>8</sup> The institutional church is one which undertakes activities in addition to those of a religious character, such as clubs, athletic teams, etc. This is in contradistinction to the traditional church, which devotes itself solely to religious matters.
- <sup>9</sup> Edmund deS. Brunner, *Industrial Village Churches*, Institute of Social and Religious Research, New York, 1930, p. 112.
- <sup>10</sup> E. O. Watson, *The Church and the Cotton Mills of the South*, The Missionary Training School, Nashville, Tenn., 1905, *passim*; *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill, op. cit.*, pp. 174-7.
- <sup>11</sup> Brunner, *op. cit.*, p. 123; Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-100; Lemert, *op. cit.*, p. 64.
- <sup>12</sup> Brunner, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-8; *Textile Worker, op. cit.*, June, 1930, p. 155.
- <sup>13</sup> National Labor Relations Board, press release, 1953, April 7, 1939; *Textile Labor, op. cit.*, February, 1942, p. 9.
- <sup>14</sup> Brunner, *op. cit.*, pp. 123, 165-8.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 165-8.
- <sup>16</sup> Liston Pope, "Mill Village Churches," *Social Action*, September 15, 1941, *passim*.
- <sup>17</sup> *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill, op. cit.*, p. 247; U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Education, *A Half-Time Mill School*, Bulletin No. 6, Washington, 1919, p. 6; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, *Commercial Survey of the Southeast*, Domestic Commerce Series, No. 19, Washington, 1927, p. 232.
- <sup>18</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-34.
- <sup>19</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 570.
- <sup>20</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-43.
- <sup>21</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 571.
- <sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 244, 250.
- <sup>23</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 244 ff.
- <sup>24</sup> Special Report # 8, *op. cit.*, p. 4; *Commercial Survey of the Southeast, op. cit.*, p. 232.
- <sup>25</sup> Rhyne, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-8.
- <sup>26</sup> *The Industrial Revolution in the South, op. cit.*, p. 172.
- <sup>27</sup> *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill, op. cit.*, pp. 115, 171; Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 482; *The Industrial Revolution in the South, op. cit.*, p. 261; John Harrison Cook, *A Study of the Mill Schools of North Carolina*, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1925, pp. 10-11.
- <sup>28</sup> Bureau of Education, Bulletin No. 6, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-10; Potwin, *op. cit.*, p. 116.
- <sup>29</sup> Cook, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-40.
- <sup>30</sup> *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill, op. cit.*, pp. 172, 231; S. H. Hobbs, Jr., *Gaston County: Economic and Social*, Edwards & Broughton Printing Co., Raleigh, N. C., 1920, p. 43.
- <sup>31</sup> Cook, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5, 31-2, 36-8; Katherine Du Pre Lumpkin and Dorothy Wolf Douglas, *Child Workers in America*, Robert M. McBride & Co., New York, 1937, pp. 147-8.
- <sup>32</sup> Rhyne, *op. cit.*, pp. 144, 146-7.
- <sup>33</sup> Brunner, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-92.

<sup>34</sup> Cook, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>35</sup> *Gaston County: Economic and Social, op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>36</sup> Bureau of Education, Bulletin No. 6, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>37</sup> Rhyne, *op. cit.*, pp. 80, 144, 146-7; MacDonald, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-7.

<sup>38</sup> Rhyne, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

<sup>39</sup> Cook, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>41</sup> Rhyne, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-4.

<sup>42</sup> Cook, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>43</sup> Elizabeth H. Davidson, *Child Labor Legislation in the Southern Textile States*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1939, p. 10; Frank Tannenbaum, *Darker Phases of the South*, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York and London, 1924, Ch. II, *passim*; Copeland, *op. cit.*, p. 45; *The Industrial Revolution in the South, op. cit.*, pp. 7-8, 33, 135-7, 160, 258; Rhyne, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34; *The Southern Textile Situation, op. cit.*, pp. 116-7; Tippet, *op. cit.*, p. 28; Evans, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-1.

<sup>44</sup> Tippet, *op. cit.*, pp. 203-4.

<sup>45</sup> *The Industrial Revolution in the South, op. cit.*, pp. 135-6; Page, *op. cit.*, p. 45; Cook, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10; Tippet, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

<sup>46</sup> Robert W. Dunn and Jack Hardy, *Labor and Textiles*, International Publishers, New York, 1931, pp. 104-5; *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill, op. cit.*, p. 141; Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 224, 268; *Monthly Labor Review, op. cit.*, January, 1919, pp. 297-8; *The Industrial Revolution in the South, op. cit.*, p. 136.

<sup>47</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 525.

<sup>48</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 552; Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 263, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-2; *Monthly Labor Review, op. cit.*, January, 1919, pp. 297-8; Rhyne, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-2.

<sup>49</sup> Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 15; Lemert, *op. cit.*, p. 134; MacDonald, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20; Massachusetts, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor*, 1905, p. 54; *Monthly Labor Review, op. cit.*, January, 1919, pp. 297-8; Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. XVI, p. 19.

<sup>50</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 122.

<sup>51</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 263, *op. cit.*, p. 44; Rhyne, *op. cit.*, pp. 78, 92-3, 124-6.

<sup>52</sup> Textile Labor Relations Board, press release 107, Case No. 2.

<sup>53</sup> Tannenbaum, *op. cit.*, ch. II, *passim*; *The Industrial Revolution in the South, op. cit.*, p. 136; MacDonald, *op. cit.*, p. 27; Blanshard, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

<sup>54</sup> Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>55</sup> Tippet, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-6.

<sup>56</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-1, 295-7; *The Industrial Revolution in the South, op. cit.*, pp. 33, 258; Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 159; Dunn and Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 166; Southeastern Economics Conference, *The Industrial South*, Banner Press, Emory University, Georgia, 1929, p. 51, a compilation of papers submitted at this conference—paper by Jean Davis, *The Economics of Welfare Work in the Cotton Mill Villages of the South*.

<sup>57</sup> Dunn and Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 169; *Hearings on S. Res. 49, op. cit.*, pp. 118-9; Tippet, *op. cit.*, p. 223; Virginius Dabney, *Liberalism in the South*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1932, p. 328.

<sup>58</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. XVI, p. 137; MacDonald, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-50; *The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South, op. cit.*, pp. 196-8; Tannenbaum, *op. cit.*, ch. II, *passim*; Rhyne, *op. cit.*, pp. 194-8; Brunner *op. cit.*, pp. 10, 82-86, 116-8; *The Industrial Revolution in the South, op. cit.*, p. 137; Dunn and Hardy, *op. cit.*, pp. 104-5; Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 160; Ralph M. Lyon, *The Basis for Constructing Materials in Adult Education for Carolina Cotton Mill Workers*, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1937, pp. 17-19; Harriet L. Herring, *The Industrial Worker*, in W. T. Couch, (ed.), *Culture in the South*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1934, pp. 344 ff.

<sup>59</sup> Rhyne, *op. cit.*, pp. 18, 156.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 207-8; Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 160; Tannenbaum, *op. cit.*, ch. II, *passim*.

<sup>61</sup> Dabney, *op. cit.*, p. 328.

<sup>62</sup> *Hearings on S. Res. 49, op. cit.*, p. 126.

<sup>63</sup> *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill, op. cit.*, pp. 168-9; Rhyne, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-7, 118-20; MacDonald, *op. cit.*, p. 147; Page, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-9; Daniels, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>64</sup> Rhyne, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-35; Blanshard, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

<sup>65</sup> Textile Labor Relations Board, press release 161, Cases Nos. 48, 162, Cases Nos. 49, 199, Case No. 92; *Textile Worker, op. cit.*, December, 1930, p. 526-8.

<sup>66</sup> *Textile Worker, op. cit.*, December, 1930, pp. 526-8.

<sup>67</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 414; Rhyne, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>68</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 224, 268; MacDonald, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

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# 6

## THE NEW ENGLAND IMMIGRANT AND THE SOUTHERN NATIVE

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JUST AS New England and the South display marked differences in the type of goods they manufacture, so are they diverse in the character of the labor force which they utilize. The New England cotton mill worker is an immigrant or the descendant of recent immigrants. The Southern mill hand is the traditional 100 per cent American.

Almost from its very beginnings the New England industry augmented the local native labor supply with newly arrived immigrants. Chronologically the English and Scotch came first, but the Irish provided the real heavy influx of immigrants who were to make the industry rest on the laborer from overseas. The famine of 1848 brought large numbers of Irish people to these shores and to employment in the thriving cotton mills. Their absorption was aided by occasional strikes which expressed the dissatisfaction of the native workers with their conditions, and many natives left the mills for better employments elsewhere. The Civil War accelerated the change in the ethnic composition of the cotton mill labor force, since many workers were called to the colors and others were dismissed when the mills closed for lack of raw cotton. With the resumption of operations at the close of the war many of the natives did not return to the mills. The majority of the labor force by the late sixties was foreign-born, with the Irish as the predominant group. The next important influx was of French Canadians who were within easy travel distance of the New England mill centers. By 1880 the French Canadians had taken the industry for their own. Though in the nineties many immigrants from the Southern and Eastern European countries went into the cotton mills, the early lead of the French Canadians has never been lost. In 1900, 46 per cent of the New England mill operatives were of French-Canadian descent in that one or both of their parents were French Canadians. The next largest group were of Irish descent (19 per cent), followed by the British (13 per cent). These three groups made up

78 per cent of the entire force. Only 7 per cent of the operatives came of parents born in this country.<sup>1</sup>

Thus at the opening of the twentieth century the labor force of the cotton mill was heavily immigrant in character, with the French Canadians as the largest single group. There are no comparable detailed data available for later years, but the French Canadians seem to have reached their peak sometime in the early nineties so that the 1900 figure given above does not represent the highest point reached by this group. After 1890 immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe began in earnest. In one large cotton mill of Lowell, Mass., the percentages of Irish, French Canadian, and native American workers showed decreases between 1901 and 1906 while the proportion of Poles, Greeks, and Portuguese increased.<sup>2</sup> A 1908 study of 46 mills in four New England states confirms this decrease of the proportion of the older groups of English, Irish, and French Canadians in the face of large increases in the percentages of Italian, Portuguese, and Polish workers.<sup>3</sup> In 1890, for example, only 3,581 persons from Southern and Eastern Europe resided in the cotton mill cities of Fall River, Lowell, New Bedford, and Manchester (N.H.). By 1900 the number had risen to 15,589, and by 1905 there were 18,621 persons from Southern and Eastern Europe in the first three cities alone.<sup>4</sup> None of these newcomers displaced the French Canadians as the leading single group in the cotton mills before the First World War changed the immigration picture completely. The difficulties which the war placed in the way of immigration, the restrictive laws which became effective after the war, and the natural results of American residence brought about a marked change in the nativity composition of the cotton mill workers.<sup>5</sup>

By 1930, for the first time in almost a century, less than half the labor force of the cotton mills of New England was of foreign birth. The percentage of white workers who were native-born of native parents or were native-born of mixed or foreign parents increased steadily from 32 per cent in 1900 to 43 per cent in 1920 and 52 per cent in 1930, while the proportion of foreign-born dropped from 68 per cent in 1900 to 47 per cent in 1930. Later years will undoubtedly show a further drop in foreign-born and an increase in native workers in the New England mills.

Why did the New England cotton mills depend upon immigrant labor so heavily almost from the start? It is probably true that the mills were already outgrowing the available sources of local labor supply before the Civil War. The industry was traditionally an em-

ployer of large numbers of women and children. Low wages were the rule for all except the comparatively few persons in the most skilled occupations. In a growing country of relatively wide opportunities, employment in a cotton mill was hardly an attraction for the native. After the Civil War the cotton mill was even less attractive in comparison with other occupations than ever before.

But this was only the small beginning of the abdication of native labor which left the field wide open to the immigrant. Specific disturbances within the industry and the expressed preferences of the employer also played their parts. The history of the industry furnishes many instances of strikes which were broken by immigrants, and of the replacement of strikers by immigrants after the strike was lost. As early as 1836, after a wage cut and strike at Lowell, Mass., the native women started to leave the cotton mill jobs to lower paid and more easily satisfied immigrants.<sup>6</sup> Frequently native women objected to working with foreigners and left on that account alone.<sup>7</sup> Immigrant strikebreakers were introduced in Fall River in 1850 and in Lawrence in 1867 and the 1879 strike in Fall River saw many of the strikers replaced by newly arrived French Canadians.<sup>8</sup> The big 1904 Fall River strike saw an exodus from the city of 13,000 strikers who were replaced by recent immigrants.<sup>9</sup> The appearance of immigrant strikebreakers was noted also for Chicopee, Mass., in 1906 and for Lowell, Mass., in 1903.<sup>10</sup> On the whole, almost every strike situation presented employment opportunities in greater or lesser degree to the newly arrived immigrants.

The cotton mill owner naturally welcomed the immigrant as a source of labor in periods of dissension, but the welcome was no less strong at other times. There is evidence that immigrant labor was recruited from Canada and abroad by the mills, and the editors of foreign-language newspapers were alleged to have been employed for this purpose.<sup>11</sup> Nor was the New England mill owner reticent about his preference for immigrant labor. During the long period, which began just after the Civil War, in which the French Canadians constituted the largest portion of the stream of immigrants, the employers found them efficient workers, docile, with an abhorrence for strikes, no objections to long hours and child labor, and a willingness to accept lower wages than their English and Irish predecessors.<sup>12</sup>

It is difficult to assess accurately the role of the immigrant in the cotton mill and the effect of the immigrants' entry on labor already established in the industry. It is not difficult to understand that the mill owners should see as virtues in the immigrant what organized

labor saw as failings. The newly arrived immigrant who applied for work in the cotton mill had no knowledge of American standards of wages and hardly any knowledge of factory industry. More than half of them were farmers or farm laborers before coming to this country, and only one-fifth of the men and one-third of the women were in any manufacturing occupation at all in their old homelands.<sup>13</sup> They were a rural people, with rural standards of living and work, transplanted abruptly to an urban industrial milieu. In this respect the New England immigrant played the same role in the industry's labor history in this area as the native Southern farmer played later in the rise of the Southern mills.

The newer immigrant groups in New England generally gained entrance first in the lowest paid and least skilled mill occupations, as one would expect from their lack of experience and training.<sup>14</sup> Whereas 64 per cent of the New England mill operatives were foreign-born in 1910, 77 per cent of the laborers were in this class.<sup>15</sup> A distribution of weekly and annual earnings in 1907-1909 by nativity and national origin shows that the highest earnings were found among the native-born of native fathers, and the lowest were for foreign-born, with the native-born of foreign fathers generally constituting an intermediate class. Among the foreign-born the older groups of Scotch, English, Irish, and French Canadians had higher earnings than the newer groups such as the Italians, Portuguese, Syrians, and Greeks.<sup>16</sup> Whether or not the newer immigrants underbid the older even for these lowest-paid jobs is difficult to determine. In specific instances it does seem that this did actually happen.<sup>17</sup> This situation was a continual source of complaint by union leaders in the industry. Certainly the relatively recent immigrants did constitute a labor reserve whose potentialities the employer was always ready to bring into realization—and especially was this true in periods of labor difficulties. The immigrant who entered at the least skilled job could be moved up into the more exacting occupations, temporarily or permanently, whenever necessary.

Even without the inducement of labor conflict, however, the employer found the new immigrants a ready source of docile labor here as in other industries. Generally they were themselves more ready not only to labor for less money and under more onerous conditions than the native or older immigrant groups would accept, but they also were more likely to send their children into the mills at an early age and to utilize the labor of their wives, either in outside employment or by keeping boarders, than were the native-born of native or foreign.



parentage.<sup>18</sup> Of 945 New England cotton mill families studied in 1907-8, 46.5 per cent of the families with native-born husbands had their entire income from the husband's labor while only 31 per cent of the foreign-born husbands supplied the whole family income and wives and children filled in the remainder.<sup>19</sup> Of course, not all the supplementary income was secured from the cotton mill, but the majority of the women and children who went to work entered the mills.<sup>20</sup>

Each new immigrant group brought with it to this country lower standards of living than the preceding group.<sup>21</sup> The newcomers lived in the less desirable quarters and under more congested conditions while they gradually acquired a knowledge of American standards and raised their own estimates of desirable living levels. In general the earning ability of the successive immigrant groups increased as their period of residence in this country lengthened.<sup>22</sup>

This advance in standards and income, however, was a very slow process at best and was probably even further retarded by the transient habits of some groups. In the early years of this century there were reports that many Poles were returning to Europe because of irregular work in the mills.<sup>23</sup> The French Canadians were most noted for their practice of returning home to their farms in Canada during times of stress, although by 1900 this practice seemed to be dying out.<sup>24</sup>

When the mill owner hired the newer immigrants he secured a labor supply at lower cost than would otherwise have been possible and one with lower living standards and little objection to long hours and the work of women and children. He also believed that he secured a labor force less prone to embrace the "twin evils" of labor unions and strikes. In these latter beliefs the mill owner was on less sure ground than he was in connection with general working conditions. It is true that the newer immigrants were not much taken with unionism, but this may have been due more to the unions themselves than to any "natural" aversion of the immigrant. In the matter of strikes (outside of the specific instances of strikebreaking which involved immigrants not formerly employed by the mill) the immigrant generally followed the lead of the unions which called the turn of action.

That the immigrants initially did have lower standards of living and were satisfied with lower pay than those already in the field is undoubted. It is also true that in particular places and times they acted as strikebreakers. At all times they were a potential source of cheap labor of which the employer and the worker were both well aware.

They were a frictional element in such unionism as there was in the industry and an obstacle, albeit only one of many, to the development of stronger unions; and the employers have not infrequently been accused of utilizing the mutual antagonisms of the different groups to their own advantage. On the other hand, it must be remembered that from its very beginnings the industry, as a large employer of women and young people, has been a low-wage area which has never held much attraction for the native American.

The restriction of immigration during and since the First World War, coupled with the decline of the New England industry since the middle twenties, has changed the face of the labor scene in New England's cotton mills. In 1930, for the first time, the native-born were over half of the operatives and the continual process of cultural and psychological assimilation acts as a further solvent to the problems formerly raised by the presence of large bodies of foreign labor.

In sharp contrast to New England, the labor force of the Southern section of the industry is almost entirely native-born. The native-born white of native parents has had no rival in the South. In 1900, when only 7 per cent of the New England workers were native whites of native parentage, 98 per cent of the Southern workers were in this category. By 1930, when 52 per cent of those in New England were of native or mixed parentage, almost 95 per cent of those in the South were in this group.<sup>25</sup>

The reasons for this great difference are apparent. Long before 1900 the North had already become the favored area of immigration. The rural South held no attractions for the newcomers from abroad, who sought here an easier and more lucrative living than their homeland afforded them. The impoverished South would hardly have been much of an improvement. A further factor has been the vast reservoir of native labor in the South which made it unnecessary for the Southern employer to look much beyond his own front porch. Only for a brief while did the Southern mill owner toy with the idea of using immigrants in the mills. In the middle of the first decade of the present century, when many mill operatives were lured back to the land by the current high price of cotton,<sup>26</sup> the resulting depletion of the labor force combined with the competition of the growing mills for the available labor led, on the one hand, to the practice of inducing workers at other mills to shift their place of employment<sup>27</sup> and, on the other hand, to the first and only attempt to use immigrants. The practice of "enticing" away the labor of another mill became a serious problem for a short while even though this was

illegal in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.<sup>28</sup> In the fall of 1907 the mill owners of Gaston County, N. C., met and agreed not to solicit each other's labor under penalty of a \$100 forfeit for each offense.<sup>29</sup>

Stealing each other's labor, however, did not add to the supply as a whole. North Carolina mills in 1906-7 continued to complain about the labor shortage and voiced hopes for the aid of immigration—although they demanded that the newcomers be pure Anglo-Saxons.<sup>30</sup> In the words of one mill official, "Immigration is our only hope. This, of course, must be properly selected, but it must come."<sup>31</sup> Said another, "Good class of immigrants is much needed, but none of Latin races; English and Germans preferred."<sup>32</sup> And still another, "Favor better class of immigrants from Northern Europe, but no dagos."<sup>33</sup>

The only actual move to secure immigrants was made by South Carolina mills which co-operated with commercial interests seeking to revive the port of Charleston and with planters seeking farm labor, and in 1906 and 1907 the *Wittekind* brought almost 500 immigrants, mainly from Austria and Belgium.<sup>34</sup> The experiment failed and was not repeated. The foreigners drifted to sections of the country where wages were better—North and West—and the South once more had to rely on the native. The reliance was made easier by the return of cotton to a lower price; this dispelled any notions as to the profitability of raising cotton.

The Southern labor supply was and continues to be strictly local in its origins. The small landowner's and tenant farmers oppressed by low staple prices and the never-ending credit claims of Southern farming were the backbone of the movement into the mills. This class has provided an almost inexhaustible reservoir of labor for the Southern mills. There have been temporary shortages, such as the one mentioned above due to a good price for cotton, and there have been times when Southern mills built and grew so fast that a labor shortage seemed imminent. Essentially, however, there has never been any lack of farmers willing to try their luck in the mills. The second, and less important, source of Southern labor has been the mountaineer element of the Southern Appalachians. Up to 1900 little use had been made of this source, but its possibilities were scratched during the labor shortage of the first decade of this century—apparently with not much success.<sup>35</sup> It was not until after the First World War, when the Southern mills again threatened to outgrow their labor supply, that a movement toward tapping the mountaineer reserve again appeared. Many mills sent their agents through the hills with offers of employ-

ment, while new mills were even built beyond the Piedmont plateau in the mountain areas proper. But the mountaineer never became a major source of labor, except for the comparatively few mills actually in the mountain regions,<sup>36</sup> because the small landowners and tenant farmers proved to be an adequate labor reservoir.

The intensely local character of the labor supply is shown by a study of 500 mill families of North Carolina in the middle twenties. Of the total number of persons in these families, 94 per cent were born in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, or Tennessee, and only one person was born outside the United States. Almost 71 per cent were born in North Carolina itself and half of these were born in the very county in which the mill was located. If we add to the latter group those born in near-by and adjoining counties we find that about three-quarters of those born in North Carolina are accounted for. Thus the chief source of the mill labor supply has been the mill county and the adjoining counties.<sup>37</sup>

The Southern labor supply has been local in origin and rural in its background. What the immigrant was to the New England mill the native farmer was to the Southern mill. Both were without previous experience in industry and both came to the mill with rural habits of work and standards of living. Almost 60 per cent of the residents of the mill villages covered in a study by Professor Lois MacDonald were born in rural districts,<sup>38</sup> and 63 per cent of the parents of the heads of the 500 mill families studied by Professor Rhyne were farmers before moving to the mills.<sup>39</sup> That the Southern mills drew their labor from the impoverished farms of the region proved to be of great significance both for the Southern mills themselves and for the industry as a whole. Whether drawn to the site by grapevine knowledge that a cotton mill was to be built or solicited by the agents of a mill under construction or needing more hands, the general character of the job seekers was the same—they were native-born whites of Anglo-Saxon ancestry who had been struggling for interminable years trying to wring a living out of the one-crop credit farming system of the South and who now sought relief and improvement of their fortunes in the mill.<sup>40</sup> One of the methods used by the mills to secure labor from the farms was for the mill to select a day on which some town was having a celebration or circus which would bring farm families from the surrounding country into town. A mill representative would then drop a leaflet into the farmers' wagons where they would be sure to find it when they got home. These circulars would describe the advantages of mill life and ask the pro-

spective workers to write to the mill for railroad tickets for the whole family. One such leaflet stated clearly the mill's desire for large families of workers. "We want families with at least three workers for the mill in each family."<sup>41</sup> Some of those who went into the mills looked upon their employment as a temporary haven from bad times; they intended to stay awhile, save some money, and return to their old farm or purchase better land which would enable them to fare better in their traditional way of life.

Most of these hopes, however, were illusory. Although in some places a regular seasonal flux of operatives from and to the farms occurred, this resistance to complete engulfment by the mill was not lasting or important. Actually very few families, at any time, have managed to combine or alternate mill and farm work and probably few ever returned to the farm permanently.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, the constant influx of new farm families into the mills did result in maintaining something of the rural tradition in the mill villages, for most mill families had friends or relatives still on the farm.<sup>43</sup>

The passage of time and the slowing down in the rate of growth of the Southern mills has naturally led to the development of a permanent population of mill workers who are increasingly losing their contacts with farming as an occupation. Professor Rhyne's study in the mid-twenties showed that whereas 63 per cent of the fathers of heads of mill families had farmed, only 51 per cent of the family heads themselves had farmed. Many of the latter had been farmers for only a short time before moving to the mill. On the other hand, the percentage of family heads who were permanently occupied as mill workers greatly increased. Only 18 per cent of the fathers of the heads of the mill families were mill workers, while 38 per cent of the male family heads themselves and 71 per cent of the single workers studied had never followed any occupations other than work in the cotton mill.<sup>44</sup> There is no reason to believe that there has been anything but a continuation of the indicated trend in the approximately fifteen years which have elapsed since the above data were collected.

The farm families which moved to the mills, for better or for worse, found themselves not only with new occupations to learn, but with the problems of adjustment to an entirely new mode of life. The transition was abrupt and complete, with no cushioning intermediate periods. One of the adjustments which had to be made was in connection with factory discipline, especially that of regular attendance at work. Though work in the farm had been strenuous, the hours were irregular and, since the farmer regulated his own labor,

work could be suspended whenever and for whatever reason the farmer saw fit. The remnants of this free farm life were first seen in the frequent absenteeism which plagued the early mills and forced them to have a good reserve of labor on hand in order to ensure having a full work force present each morning.<sup>45</sup>

Compared to the almost primitive level of existence which was endured on the farm, life in the mill village was indeed a great advance. From a farm economy in which cash money was not often seen, the family stepped into a world which seemed munificent in contrast. There is no doubt that the mill worker was materially better off than the farmer—and this was the magnet which drew countless numbers from the farm to the factory in the South as elsewhere. Poor as the operative was, and poor as he seemed to any outsider, one has but to consider the life of the farmer and mountaineer to realize that almost every advantage lay with the mill as against the debt-burdened farm. This is true for yesterday and today and seems likely to hold for tomorrow as well. The lure of the mill was no chimera—it was actuality. It was this background of impoverishment and barrenness, of destitution in the present and hopelessness for the future that gave the Southern mills their unlimited source of labor—a source easier to tap, because closer at hand, than were the immigrants who came to the New England mills.

In many respects the Southern farmer occupied a place in the labor scheme similar to that of the New England immigrants. The New England immigrant came mostly from an agricultural background, the Southerner was almost wholly from agriculture; both were poor when they came in search of employment; and both had low standards of living. The New England immigrant competed directly with the New England native, and the Southerner competed indirectly with both New England groups. For both the New England immigrant and the native Southerner their new earnings seemed vast by comparison with their former state. Between near-subsistence credit farming and mill work there could be but one choice. The Southern employer as well as the operative was well aware of this. Conditions which might have aroused protest in a region of alternative employment were accepted in a South which had little else but tenant farming and cotton mills—a South which was, and has to this day remained, predominantly rural in character and scattered in its limited industries.

The reserve of farm and mountaineer labor which the South used to build its cotton manufacturing industry thus acted simultaneously

as a guard against possible expressions of discontent by those already in the mills—much the same as immigration did for New England. But where new laws have cut New England off from its old labor reserve, the South still has a vast potential labor supply—a potentiality which may materialize into actuality when the Southern mill owner believes it necessary. The relatively few disputes of the past in the South have already seen much use made of this reserve. It remains an ever-present threat which must be reckoned with in all the dealings of labor with employer in this area of the industry.<sup>46</sup>

The South has yet another labor reserve which has been relatively untouched. The large Negro population of the regions has so far been virtually excluded from any but a minor role in the history of cotton manufacturing in the South. Negroes were less than 2 per cent of the labor force of the Southern mills in 1900, reached a peak of just over 8 per cent in 1920, and have since declined again to 5.6 per cent in 1930. It is in the group of "mill laborers," the heavy unskilled and menial tasks, that the Negro has found work. Negroes have been from 24 to 28 per cent of all Southern cotton mill workers in this group; and always 80 per cent or more of the Negroes in the mills have been laborers while only a small proportion have found their way into the ranks of the operatives.<sup>47</sup>

The exclusion of Negroes from a larger share in mill work, and their restriction to the least desirable jobs, is a result of the deliberate discriminatory social and economic structure of the South. Negro slaves operated cotton mills in the South long before the Civil War.<sup>48</sup> Up to 1900 there were several attempts, with varying success, to use Negro operatives with whites and to operate mills entirely with Negro workers.<sup>49</sup> Although mills using Negro labor entirely have not succeeded, their failure cannot be attributed to this race factor, but rather to general business conditions and errors which might be found in any other enterprise whether employing Negroes or not.<sup>50</sup> There appeared to be no limit to the supposed justifications of the exclusion of the Negro from the work of operatives—Negroes were said to be temperamentally, morally, physically, etc., etc., unfit to be anything but laborers.<sup>51</sup> All these reasons were, of course, beside the point, for the Negroes have proved elsewhere and in other industries that they can learn to perform operations above the unskilled level, and Southern mill interests have admitted their competence.<sup>52</sup>

The real barrier has been the traditional attitude of the Southern people toward the Negro as an economic competitor. In agriculture, the lowest in the scale of economic life, the Southern poor whites

have had difficult competition with the Negro and those whites who have stepped upward to the better livelihood of the mill have been determined to reserve this sphere for their own benefit. This determination has been strong enough to bring about the legalization of this race discrimination in at least one state. In 1915, South Carolina passed a law enforcing the restriction of Negroes to the menial tasks where they would not mix with the white operatives.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina, That it shall be unlawful for any person, firm or corporation engaged in the business of cotton textile manufacturing in this State to allow or permit operatives, help and labor of different races to labor and work together within the same room, or to use the same doors of entrance and exit at the same time, or to use and occupy the same pay ticket windows or doors for paying off its operatives and laborers at the same time, or to use the same stairways and windows at the same time, or to use at any time the same lavatories, toilets, drinking water buckets, pails, cups, dippers or glasses: Provided, Equal accommodations shall be supplied and furnished to all persons employed by said person, firm or corporation engaged in the business of cotton textile manufacturing as aforesaid, without distinction as to race, color or previous condition.

This Act shall not apply to employment of firemen as subordinates in boiler rooms, truckmen, or to floor scrubbers and those persons employed in keeping in proper condition lavatories and toilets, and carpenters, mechanics and others engaged in the repair or erection of buildings.<sup>53</sup>

South Carolina mill owners, however, did not hesitate to violate this law when they found it convenient or necessary to employ Negroes together with whites.<sup>54</sup> Where mill owners have attempted to use a mixed force, strikes have sometimes resulted which generally forced the discharge of the Negroes.<sup>55</sup> The mill owner who wanted to use a mixed force or a complete Negro force also had to reckon with the possibility that if any Negro labor he hired proved unsatisfactory and had to be discharged, it would be impossible to get whites to use the mill house which the Negro formerly occupied.<sup>56</sup> All of this made experimentation a risky process and made exclusion the safer course.

Such unions as there were in the South were of little help. Hard put to organize even the white workers, they had neither the ability nor the inclination to cope with the problem of racial interrelations. One of the earliest Southern unions participated in a strike against an attempt to use a mixed work force.<sup>57</sup> The United Textile Workers,



A.F. of L., which was the only cotton mill union to operate in the South in most of the present century, rarely made any real organizational progress in the South, and when a handful of Negroes joined during a strike they were shunted off into segregated locals which quickly disappeared.<sup>58</sup> Only during the union boom of 1933-34 was this U.T.W. tradition broken by at least one local in the Birmingham area which admitted a few Negroes to its organization. The Short-lived but vigorous Communist-affiliated National Textile Workers Union which mushroomed through the South in the late twenties and early thirties was the only union to come out flatly for racial equality and unity and to make use of a Negro organizer.<sup>59</sup> The dominant force in unionism in Southern cotton mills at the present time is the Textile Workers Union of America, C.I.O., formed by an amalgamation of the remnants of the old U.T.W. and the Textile Workers Organizing Committee. The T.W.U.A. has made no public announcements as to its position on the employment of Negroes in the mills or their place in the union scheme of things. The T.W.U.A. does have Negro members, but their participation in union affairs is left to local control.<sup>60</sup>

While the white Southern mill worker has opposed the extension of the use of the Negro beyond the rank of laborer, and the unions have gone along with the tide, the Southern mill owner has not been blind to the advantages which he might derive from the Negro labor reserve. On at least one occasion Negroes have been used as strike-breakers.<sup>61</sup> Primarily the Negro has remained a potential rival to the white worker in the same way that the Southern farmer played the role—with the added element of race prejudice in the case of the Negro. Before the First World War the Negro was considered speculatively for work in the mill when it seemed that a labor shortage might develop in the South. Some Southerners, however, looked to the Negro as a dominant element in the labor force of the future and as a permanent buffer against possible discontent of the white workers and unionism. All this, however, might never be necessary, for merely the knowledge that the employer had a Negro labor reserve at his call would in all likelihood be sufficient to keep labor "reasonable."<sup>62</sup>

With the passing of the temporary labor shortage of the early part of the century, and the realization by the mill owners that the hills and farms still had a great white reserve ready at hand, the question of the use of Negroes lapsed into quietude until shortly after the First World War when unionism spurted in the South and a more

serious searching of the possibilities of the Negro was stimulated in order to maintain the New England-South wage differential in the face of child labor legislation and unionism.<sup>63</sup> But for the Southern mill owner the depression of 1921 straightened out the labor problem and the use of Negroes in the mills again subsided into the academic question which it remains today.

The present prospects may even indicate a retrogression in the already small role played by the Negro in the mills. Under the NRA, the code permitted a lower minimum to be paid to cleaners and to outside employees, groups which are predominantly Negro in the South. Under the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act no such discrimination is allowed and many mill owners told this writer in 1938, that they were thinking of replacing the Negro with whites in these unskilled occupations—especially when there were unemployed whites available and the juxtaposition of an unemployed white with an employed Negro (at what the employer considers exorbitant wages) was not calculated to satisfy the white workers. Whether this will actually be the case remains to be seen.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER

<sup>1</sup> *Appendix, Table II.*

<sup>2</sup> *Massachusetts Labor Bulletin, op. cit.*, May, 1906, p. 199.

<sup>3</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> Senate Document 633, *op. cit.*, Vol. 10, Part 3, pp. 34, 37.

<sup>5</sup> *Appendix, Table III.*

<sup>6</sup> Harriet H. Robinson, *Loom and Spindle*, Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., New York and Boston, 1898, p. 86.

<sup>7</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 114.

<sup>8</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 69; Copeland, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-6.

<sup>9</sup> Senate Document 633, *op. cit.*, Vol. 10, Part 3, p. 39.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 283-4; Vera Shlakman, "Economic History of a Factory Town," *Smith College Studies in History*, October, 1934-July, 1935, pp. 219-20.

<sup>11</sup> *The Old Factory Towns in New England, op. cit.*, p. 287; M. D. C. Crawford, *The Heritage of Cotton*, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1924, p. 172; Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. IX, *History of Women in Industry in the United States*, pp. 82-83, Vol. I, p. 114; Senate Document 633, *op. cit.*, Vol. 10, Part 3, p. 117; Dunn and Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

<sup>12</sup> *Labor and Capital 1885, op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 31, 37, 57, 81, 198, 205; Copeland, *op. cit.*, p. 120; Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 114.

<sup>13</sup> Senate Document 633, *op. cit.*, Vol. 10, Part 3, pp. 73-6.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 126, 178-9, 285; C. E. Persons, "Women's Work and Wages in the United States," *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, February, 1915, p. 217.

<sup>15</sup> 1910 Census, Vol. IV, p. 434 ff.

<sup>16</sup> Senate Document 633, *op. cit.*, Vol. 10, Part 3, pp. 83-106, 367-72.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 285.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 108, 110-11, 170-2, 185-6.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 113-4.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 177-9; Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 222-3; Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. XVI, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

<sup>22</sup> Senate Document 633, *op. cit.*, Vol. 10, Part 3, pp. 95, 127, 133-4, 140, 193-8; Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. XVI, pp. 187-8, 245.

<sup>23</sup> Shlakman, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

<sup>24</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. XIV, pp. 293 ff., 421, 544, 569, 580; *The Old Factory Towns in New England*, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

<sup>25</sup> *Appendix*, Table IV.

<sup>26</sup> *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill*, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-1; Massachusetts, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor*, 1905, p. 45.

<sup>27</sup> North Carolina, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor and Printing*, 1906, pp. 256, 258.

<sup>28</sup> North Carolina, *Public Laws and Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly*, 1907, ch. 402; Georgia, *Code of 1895*, sec. 122; South Carolina, *Acts*, *op. cit.*, 1913, No. 28; South Carolina, *Code of 1912*, sec. 504.

<sup>29</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 126.

<sup>30</sup> North Carolina, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor and Printing*, 1906, pp. 254-66, 1907, pp. 244-58.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 1906, pp. 254-6.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 1906, pp. 254-6.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 1906, p. 264.

<sup>34</sup> Broadus Mitchell, *The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South*, Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1921, p. 206, note 91; Potwin, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>35</sup> Senate Document, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 119-28.

<sup>36</sup> *The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South*, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-7; MacDonald, *op. cit.*, p. 146; Rhyne, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>37</sup> Rhyne, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-70.

<sup>38</sup> MacDonald, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

<sup>39</sup> Rhyne, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-75.

<sup>40</sup> Potwin, *op. cit.*, p. 31; Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 549-53, 570-1; *The Industrial Revolution in the South*, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10; Rhyne, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68; *The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South*, *op. cit.*, pp. 208-9.

<sup>41</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 120-2.

<sup>42</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 501, 513, 545, 568; Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. XVII, pp. 22-23; Massachusetts, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor*, 1905, p. 45; Page, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34; *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill*, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-70; Tannenbaum, *op. cit.*, p. 43; *The New South*, *op. cit.*, p. 121; Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 9; *The Industrial Revolution in the South*, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-1, 138; Works Progress Administration, Division of Social Research, *Combined Farming-Industrial Employment in the Cotton Textile Subregion of Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina*, Research Bulletin, Series J-1, Preliminary Report, February, 1936, p. 29.

<sup>43</sup> Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>44</sup> Rhyne, *op. cit.*, pp. 72-75, 77.

<sup>45</sup> Copeland, *op. cit.*, p. 41; *The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South*, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

<sup>46</sup> Industrial Revolution, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 482, 493; *The New South*, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-9; *The Industrial Revolution in the South*, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20, 53, 118, 123, 138; *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill*, *op. cit.*, p. 2, 109-10; *The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South*, *op. cit.*, p. 173; *The Southern Textile Situation*, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-6; Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 159; Crawford, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

<sup>47</sup> *Appendix*, Tables IV and V.

<sup>48</sup> *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill*, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

<sup>49</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 485, 488, 505-8; *The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South*, *op. cit.*, pp. 213-5; J. Dowd, "Textile War Between the North and the South," *Forum*, June, 1898, p. 443.

<sup>50</sup> *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill*, *op. cit.*, pp. 248-63; *The New South*, *op. cit.*, pp. 126-7; Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 226; Lorenzo J. Greene and Carter G. Woodson, *The Negro Wage Earner*, The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, Inc., Washington, 1930, pp. 145-51.

<sup>51</sup> Greene and Woodson, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-51; *The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South*, *op. cit.*, p. 178; Edgar Gardner Murphy, *Problems of the Present South*, Macmillan Co., New York, 1904, p. 103; *Textile War Between the North and the South*, *op. cit.*, p. 443; Potwin, *op. cit.*, p. 59; Copeland, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-48.

<sup>52</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 488, 521, 764, 782.

<sup>53</sup> South Carolina, *Acts*, *op. cit.*, 1915, No. 69, 1916, No. 391.

<sup>54</sup> South Carolina, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, Commerce, and Industry*, 1920, pp. 24-25; *Hearings on S. Res. 49*, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-14.

<sup>55</sup> Greene and Woodson, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-8; U.S. Department of Labor, *Sixteenth Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor*, 1901, *Strikes and Lockouts 1881-1900*, pp. 484-5.

<sup>56</sup> *Textile War Between the North and the South*, *op. cit.*, p. 443.

<sup>57</sup> Greene and Woodson, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-8.

<sup>58</sup> Page, *op. cit.*, p. 73; Sterling D. Spero and Abram L. Harris, *The Black Worker*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1931, pp. 323-4, 350-1; Blanchard, *op. cit.*, p. 69; Robert R. R. Brooks, *The United Textile Workers of America*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation in Sterling Library, Yale University (typewritten), 1935, p. 77.

<sup>59</sup> Spero and Harris, *op. cit.*, pp. 323-4; Horace R. Cayton and George S. Mitchell, *Black Workers and the New Unions*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1939, p. 328.

<sup>60</sup> *Textile Labor*, *op. cit.*, July 1, 1941, p. 8, October 1, 1941, p. 3, December 3, 1941, p. 3, July, 1942, p. 11.

<sup>61</sup> Blanchard, *op. cit.*, p. 68; Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

<sup>62</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 764-7.

<sup>63</sup> *The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South*, *op. cit.*, pp. 219-20.

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# 7

## INTERREGIONAL COMPETITION

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WHILE THE mill owners were grappling with the problems raised by foreign competition here and abroad, with the demands of fashion and fiber changes, and were faced with the problem of chronic unprofitable capacity, the home industry became divided against itself.

The existence of Southern cotton mill towns and their oft-cited concomitant, the deserted mill town of New England, is well known. But hardly more than half a century ago even the possibility of such a picture would have been scoffed at, and not least of all by Southerners themselves. Though cotton mills were not unknown in the South in the ante-bellum period, the development of this section of the industry in its modern form is properly a story of the years after 1880. In the early years of this decade the South plunged into such an orgy of mill building that the name "cotton mill crusade" has been aptly given to this phase of the industry's history. The rate of growth was truly phenomenal. In 1870 the South had less than 10 per cent of the industry's operatives, by 1900 it had almost one-third. The reaction of the New England mill owners ranged all the way from ridicule to fear, with an ample sprinkling of assertions and "proofs" that mills could not be profitably operated in the South. This at a time when Southern mills were declaring dividends which would make even owners of prosperous New England mills envious. The first New England mills to feel the impact of Southern competition were those making the coarse grades of goods which, being simplest to manufacture, first attracted the new mills. Among these older mills the reaction was one of fear for their future. Southern attempts to make better grades of goods before 1895 had been unsuccessful, and New England mills in these lines ridiculed the Southern industry.

By the early nineties the Southern section of the industry was an infant, albeit a lusty one, regarded with mingled feelings by its unwilling New England brothers. But by the turn of the century the ridicule was fading. The hard years of the mid-nineties had put the

entire economy of the nation through an ordeal, and while the New England cotton mills languished the Southern mills forged ahead. Southern mill owners even began to experiment with the production of finer yarns, and the proved ability of the South in the lower grades made New England wary of dismissing this new threat with an air of easy confidence. With the beginning of the twentieth century the Southern cotton industry had come of age. By the time of this writing it has reached full maturity while New England has slipped past middle age into reminiscences of her heyday.<sup>1</sup>

Since cotton manufacturing is usually among the first fields to develop in those countries or areas which are making their first starts toward an industrial economy, it is natural to expect that for some time the cotton industry will bulk large in the total manufactures of that area. Later on cotton manufacturing surrenders its primacy to still newer and growing industries. And this is, as a matter of fact, illustrated by the history of the development of cotton manufacturing in New England and the South. To bring out the difference between New England and the South in this respect, the figures for the principal Southern states of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama, are compared with Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. In 1933 the percentage which the value of cotton goods was to all manufactures in the given state was as follows: Virginia, 4 per cent, North Carolina, 22 per cent, South Carolina, 63 per cent, Georgia 33 per cent, and Alabama, 26 per cent. In the same year, the percentage for Maine was 13, for New Hampshire 16, for Massachusetts 6, for Connecticut 3, and for Rhode Island 11.<sup>2</sup>

Yet these figures do not tell the whole story of the importance of the industry to a state, or area, or town. For cotton manufacturing has, from the earliest times in this country, been an industry which has localized itself in areas smaller than the state.<sup>3</sup> The cotton mill town, with all its implications of dependency upon one field of manufacturing endeavor, very frequently placing this dependency on just one mill or one corporation, has recently come into prominence through the distress occasioned by the failure of this means of support. The consequences of such dependence often form a distressing picture, as a trip through New England's many former mill towns and some Southern towns whose mills could not meet the competition will illustrate.

The notion that the Southern industry is nothing more than the product of migrating New England capital is not well-founded. The existence in the South of branches of New England mills and the

transfer of the activity of some New England mills to the South has given this concept a currency far beyond the warrant of the facts of the situation.

The growth of the industry in the South was, and in a large measure continues to be, a product of the effort of the South itself. In the beginnings of the development in the early 1880's, and still more in the depressed years of the middle nineties, the South received needed aid from the machinery manufacturers and commission merchants of the North. This aid was generally in the form of the acceptance by the Northerners of mill stock in payment for machinery and services, although the commission houses more usually advanced working capital in return for the privilege of being the mill's selling agency. Most of the stock was resold when conditions were favorable, though in some cases the commission merchants held on to the stock in the attempt to control the output of the mill. By the start of the present century the Southern industry had proved its worth, and though aid continued to come from outside the South, two factors kept the industry mostly in local hands. The first of these was the success of the Southern mills, which in itself helped to alleviate the local capital shortage and thus continue the growth of the Southern industry through persons already in the field. The second factor was the continued growth of the New England cotton mills. Northern mills used their surplus capital to enlarge their own plants instead of investing in Southern branches. Indeed, one of the earliest of the careful writers on the industry observed, in this connection, about the end of the first decade of the present century that "No new southern branches have been established for several years, and one hears no suggestion that any are contemplated."<sup>4</sup> That local capital was most important, though augmented by Northern sources, is also the opinion of the foremost writers on the Southern industry.<sup>5</sup>

A 1922 study by the National Association of Cotton Manufacturers which investigated the ownership and control of over 90 per cent of the Southern spindleage reported that 84 per cent was owned or controlled by Southern capital, 11 per cent was controlled by Northern capital, 3 per cent was owned by New England mills, and 2 per cent was controlled by Western capital.<sup>6</sup> Data compiled for 1928 show only eighteen New England cotton mills having Southern branches, and the total number of branches at this time was only twenty-five.<sup>7</sup> A further study based on 1931 figures for North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama shows that only 15 per cent of the spindles and 12 per cent of the looms in these states were Northern-owned. The percentage of spindles and looms which were

Northern-owned increased as one went farther South, with Alabama having the largest proportion of Northern-owned equipment.<sup>8</sup>

It has been just noted that the two factors which served to retain control of the industry in Southern hands after its profitability had been proved were that the success of the Southern mills themselves helped to alleviate the local capital shortage and the continued growth of New England mills provided a near-by outlet for the surplus capital of New England mill owners. The fact that the farther South one goes the more in evidence is outside capital, coupled with the fact that the lower South is the most recently developed area, suggests that one of the two factors which served to retain control in Southern hands is now in abeyance. The New England section of the industry started its actual decline in the mid-twenties, thus closing a capital outlet for Northern funds which had previously served New England mills. It seems unlikely, however, that outside capital will advance further in the South, for the Southern industry itself is now more or less at a standstill so far as the increase of its capacity is concerned. Since 1935, in fact, the number of spindles in place in the South has declined slightly.<sup>9</sup>

In terms of productive capacity, spindleage in place in New England reached its peak at 18,930,000 spindles in 1923 and since then has declined steadily. By 1931 the number of spindles in place in New England had fallen below the figure at the beginning of the century. The descent continued until, in 1940, New England had less than 6 million spindles in place compared to almost 19 million in 1923 and almost 13 million in 1899. The number of spindles in place in the South increased steadily from 4.3 million in 1899 to 19 million in 1930, then fluctuated within a small range for a few years, and reached an all-time peak at 19,340,000 spindles in 1935. Since 1935 the number of spindles in place in the South also has declined—this region losing a bit more than one million spindles between 1935 and 1940. In terms of percentages, in 1899 New England had 68 per cent of the country's spindles while the South had but 23 per cent. By 1940 New England's share of the country's spindleage had dropped to 24 per cent whereas the South had 73 per cent of the spindles in place.<sup>10</sup> The number of wage earners in New England reached its peak at over 203,000 in 1919 and thereafter dropped steadily. In 1939 New England had 66,000 workers—less than half the number of wage earners which it had in 1899. The number of wage earners in the South, on the other hand, increased almost steadily from 97,000 in 1899 to over 304,000 in 1937, with a drop to 292,000 in 1939. In 1899 New England had 55 per cent of the country's wage earners in cotton manufacturing as against 33



per cent in the South. In 1939 New England's proportion had dropped to 17 per cent while the South had 74 per cent of the wage earners.<sup>11</sup>

The rise of the Southern industry and its effect upon the older New England section is further illustrated by the data on idle spindleage. In 1909 New England had a smaller proportion of its spindles idle than the South, but from 1914 onward the tables were reversed. In 1914 New England had 55 per cent of the spindles in place in this country, but it had almost two-thirds of the idle spindleage. At the same time the South had 40 per cent of the spindles in place, but had only 22 per cent of the country's idle spindleage. The story was similar when the 1919 Census of Manufactures was taken.<sup>12</sup>

Since 1922 there are detailed figures readily available whose significance is painfully obvious. Not only did New England's share of the country's spindles in place decline from 68 per cent in 1899 to 24 per cent in 1940, while the South progressed, but the number of spindles in the older section has declined heavily since the mid-twenties. Furthermore, the remaining spindles in place in New England contain a far larger proportion of idle spindleage than the South. For the crops years<sup>13</sup> 1906 to 1923 the idle spindleage in the country averaged 2 per cent; fluctuating between 1 or 1½ per cent in good years and 3 or 4 per cent in bad years. Since 1923, however, the idle spindleage has increased and has been concentrated in New England. In 1933, 25 per cent of the New England spindles were idle throughout the year, whereas in the rest of the country the idle spindleage was 7 per cent. In 1934 these percentages were 21 and 5, respectively.<sup>14</sup> Since 1933 the decline in the number of spindles in place in New England has been accompanied by a greater utilization of the remaining spindleage, but New England still has a greater proportion of dead spindleage than the South. In 1940, 10 per cent of the New England spindles were idle throughout the year as against 3 per cent idle in the South.<sup>15</sup>

The New England decline in active spindles, and in its share of the country's active spindle hours, only reinforces the vividness of the geographic shift of dominance within the industry. From the crop year of 1924 to the first eight months of the crop year 1934-35, the active spindleage of Rhode Island declined 61 per cent, of Massachusetts 60 per cent, of Connecticut 40 per cent, of Maine 37 per cent, and of New Hampshire 22 per cent. In 1922 the South had 44 per cent of the country's spindleage while it had 54 per cent of the active spindle-hours. In 1932 the South had 60 per cent of the spindles while it had 78 per cent of the active spindle-hours. Though New England under the NIRA code recovered from the depression more than the South, in 1934 the South had 74 per cent of the active spindle-hours

compared to its less than two-thirds of the industry's total spindleage.<sup>16</sup> By 1940 the number of active spindles in New England was less than one-third of the peak reached in 1921, and was less than half the figure of 1890—a half century earlier.<sup>17</sup> In 1940 New England had 24 per cent of the country's spindles but had only 19 per cent of the country's spindle-hours, while the South had 73 per cent of the spindles and 79 per cent of the spindle-hours.<sup>18</sup>

What this means in terms of employment opportunity can only be realized when one recalls the extent to which whole populations of smaller towns and large proportions of good-sized cities in New England are dependent on the cotton mills for a livelihood. "The evidence is clear that mill closings in New England, which occurred largely prior to 1933, have left large stranded populations which will probably never be reabsorbed in cotton manufacture. Further losses in spindleage will accentuate this already serious national problem."<sup>19</sup> Since this statement was made in 1935 there have been further losses in spindleage and in employment as shown by the 1939 Census of Manufactures. With the war industry boom in New England, the former cotton mill workers at least have employment opportunities available which were not present up to now.

The regional distribution of the industry's growth is further illustrated by the data on the chief form of output—woven goods over twelve inches in width. In 1909 the South had 42 per cent of the production in square yards and 37 per cent of the value of the total production in the United States. In 1919, the first year for which the data are complete, the South had 54 per cent of the production in terms of pounds, 51 per cent of the yardage, and 43 per cent of the total value. In 1935 the South had 81 per cent of the poundage, 78 per cent of the yardage, and 74 per cent of the value. In all measures the South had steadily increased its proportion of the country's output.<sup>20</sup>

The New England mills engaged in the manufacture of the coarser yarns and fabrics were the first to feel seriously the impact of Southern competition before the beginning of the present century. This was to be expected, since the South naturally turned first to the type of goods which was least exacting in the technical requirements of production. Many of the New England mills so affected turned to the manufacture of better fabrics and yarns for which the increasing population and prosperity of the country was raising a demand. Before 1895 attempts of Southern mills to make better grades of goods had generally been unsuccessful, and many Northerners expected the

New England industry to subsist indefinitely on the manufacture of the finer grades; some, indeed, even gave rhetorical thanks to the South for forcing the New England mills along this path. Shrewder observers realized that this could be but a temporary condition, and even in the closing years of the nineteenth century the more ambitious of the Southern mill owners started to equip themselves for the manufacture of higher grades of yarns and fabrics. Southern supremacy, though, came earliest in the coarser grades, and only gradually extended itself to the better grades.

Up to 1919 the South was increasing the proportion of its yarn spun which was in grades above the lowest. In 1899, 76 per cent of the yarn spun in the South was in the lowest grade, while in 1919 the percentage had dropped to 59. At the same time the South increased its proportion of the medium yarns from 24 per cent to 38 per cent of total Southern production, and of the finer yarn from 0.1 per cent to 3 per cent. During this period New England was also improving the quality of its yarn. From 1927 to 1935 there was little change in the quality of Southern yarns. The South continued to do over one-half of its spinning in the lowest grade, and showed only minor and fluctuating changes in the other grades.

Thus, since the beginning of the present century, both New England and the South have improved the quality of their yarns. The changes since 1927 have been minor. The South continues to place chief reliance on the lowest grade which accounts for over half the Southern output, with the medium grade running close behind. In New England over half the yarn output is in the medium grade, with the lowest grade close behind. The finest grades are far more important in New England than in the South, but even in the former they are minor factors in the quantitative aspects of the industry.<sup>21</sup> Comparing the two regions more directly, it is apparent that the South is supreme by a wide margin in the spinning of the lower grade yarns, honors in the medium grades are divided, and New England dominates in the finest yarns.<sup>22</sup>

A similar story of the South's progress is revealed by a comparison of the quality of the industry's chief product—woven goods over twelve inches in width. By 1900 the South passed New England in the production of sheeting and shirting, duck and drill; by 1905 the South had forged ahead in ticks, denims, and stripes, and by 1919 took the lead in print cloth.<sup>23</sup>

Since 1919 the Southern lead in sheetings, drills, print cloth, and denims has increased. In twills and sateens, reps, poplin, broadcloth,

and gingham, the South was in the lead in 1933 where it had been trailing in 1921. In lawns, nainsooks, and cambrics, the South in 1933 was still far behind, though her position in these cloths had improved since 1921. The quality of the goods of each given type produced in the South (except print cloth) is still slightly below that of New England. This is indicated by the fact that the South's share of the value produced is less than the share of the yardage produced.<sup>24</sup>

The divergent fields of the Southern and Northern mills are not adequately indicated even by these data, for even where yarn and cloth made in the two regions fall in the same census classification, there are variations in quality and styling which differentiate the production of North and South—thus emphasizing the noncompetitive character of most of the present output of the regions.

The phenomenal rise of the South to a position of dominance in cotton manufacturing has elicited much comment, both from those within the industry and from outsiders as well. Much controversy has been stirred over the relative advantages and disadvantages of New England and the South for cotton mill location. In reality the questions raised have been complex ones and no single simple answer can be given to account for the development of the industry in the South and its eventual triumph over the long-established mills of New England—though it is true that certain factors are more important than others.

Into the competition between the two regions went differences in legislative protection of adult workers and children, tax rates, assessments and local exemptions and inducements, mill village costs, power and building costs, freight rates on raw materials and on the manufactured goods, age and condition of the equipment, managerial and labor efficiency and costs, and industrial relations. That the South has been able to manufacture and get its product on the market at less cost than New England is beyond doubt. The relative weights of the components of this lesser cost have, with one or two exceptions, changed since the South entered the industry.

When the South, about 1880, set its feet on the road toward industrialization, there existed in New England a body of labor legislation and child labor protective laws which, though insignificant compared to the codes of today, was in sharp contrast to the almost complete absence of such regulation in the South. As the labor codes of New England advanced to more carefully drafted laws and more effective enforcement, the South made its first feeble starts in the direction of protective legislation. This was the course of events down past the first third of the present century—the South advancing

slowly and reluctantly while New England kept always one step ahead. The main advantages which the South secured for its mills in this aspect of the competition were in the field of hours of labor for women and children and the age at which work was permissible. This differential in favor of the South narrowed as progressive elements in the South gained in influence, but the final legal equalization did not come until the advent of the NIRA in 1933-1935 and the passage of the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938.

Somewhat the same course of events is indicated in the case of tax rates, assessments, local exemptions, and mill village costs. There is no doubt that the Southern mill has had a lower tax burden than the New England mill for the greater part of the present century. Where the Southern tax rate equaled that of New England, the leniency of the assessment in the South made up for the apparent equality. Further favors of tax exemption or reduction, for various periods of time, have been extended to Southern mills by the state, county, and municipal governments and local taxing bodies. The Southern advantage in this respect, however, has always had an element of unreality, for part of the lesser tax burden of the Southern mill has had to be expended on the maintenance of a mill village. Thus where the New England mill paid for governmental services through taxation, the Southern mill had mill village expenses which took the place of taxation. It is true, nevertheless, that the mill village costs were under the control of the Southern mill owner and very likely did not absorb all of the tax differential. More recently it has become doubtful that the Southern mill has managed to maintain even this apparent tax advantage. Mill village costs have been rising under the pressure of the demand for better facilities, at the same time that expanding governmental services have forced taxes up in the South where, until recently, the government provided a minimum of services. Tax exemptions and inducements also have become less frequent, especially in the Southeastern states where most of the Southern industry is located, though west of Alabama these inducements are becoming more frequent at present. Coincidentally with the rise in mill village costs and taxes in the South, the New England states and communities have been avoiding tax increases, lowering mill assessments, and otherwise attempting to reduce the burden on their cotton mills. The net result of these interacting and compensating movements in New England and the South has been to leave the Southern mill with little, if any, of its former advantage in this sphere of costs.

Raw material costs and freight rates constitute another aspect of

the New England-Southern competition in which conditions have changed over the past half century. When the Southern mills first started to develop, their location in the principal cotton-growing region of the country gave them an advantage over the New England mills in procuring raw material. Where the New England mill got its cotton by a long shipment via rail, water, or rail-water, the Southern mill bought cotton from the farmers' wagons, or from the nearly local markets—at a saving which varied in importance, but was none the less always present. The rapid growth of the Southern mills themselves, and certain other developments in the growing of cotton, however, soon reduced this raw material saving to an unimportant fraction of its former extent and of the total cost of production. The Southern mills even before the end of the first decade of this century began to outgrow their local sources of cotton. They were consuming more cotton than their adjacent regions were growing—even if it were possible to use all the local cotton without regard to the length and quality of the staple. Coincidentally, the major production (especially of the most desirable qualities) of the raw material moved westward to the more fertile lands of the Mississippi delta and the Southwest, notably Texas, and recently to the irrigated regions of Arizona and New Mexico. In terms of cost this means that the Southern mill gets its cotton from sources which are not much different in rail distance and cost from those of the New England mill. Furthermore, many New England mills are in a position to use the cheaper all-water or rail-and-water transportation. Thus, the advantage which the Southern mill once obtained from its local cotton supply has dwindled under the influence of the westward movement of cotton growing and increased consumption by the mills. It is extremely doubtful that there is any advantage at all left to the South as against New England on this score, except for the comparatively few Southern mills which have established themselves farther westward and nearer the new centers of the cotton culture.

The advantage in raw material costs which the early Southern mills enjoyed because of the local cotton supply was always partially offset by the necessity of sending the manufactured product to New England for the final operations of finishing, bleaching, and dyeing. For a long time the South had no important place in these operations because of the superior quality of the water supply in New England and the consequent dominance of the North in this auxiliary industry which prepared the mill product for final use. With improved methods of water preparation and treatment, this auxiliary industry has been

making rapid paces in the South, thus reducing total freight charged to the Southern product, but New England still retains its lead in the finishing operations.

A further consideration which reduced the early Southern mill's transportation advantage due to local raw cotton is the fact that the major cotton goods market is concentrated in New York City—the style and apparel center of the nation. Thus the Southern mill with a raw material advantage over New England found that it was offset by the cost of shipping North for finishing and sale. When the raw material advantage faded the South improved its own finishing facilities, but still had to market much of its product far away in New York while the New England mill has always been well-located in reference to finishing operations and its customers. Recently, the cotton garment industry has been developing in the South and is providing a near-by market for cotton goods made and finished in the South. But the major consuming markets still remain where the South has no advantage over New England.

The net result of the transportation advantages and disadvantages on raw cotton and finished cotton goods is that in the competition of the two regions the transportation advantage has shifted from time to time with no apparent differential for either region at the present time.

In the realm of power and building costs the purported advantage of Southern mills over those of New England is also somewhat tenuous. It is true that the less extreme climate of the South does permit of lighter mill construction and that the lower labor costs of the South in the building field further reduce the cost of initial construction and maintenance. The margin in this respect is slight, however, especially when we consider that the saving is not of the type that can be immediately realized, but must be taken out gradually over a period of years in a lower reserve for depreciation and maintenance. In power costs the margin of advantage of the South is small, but it is definitely and immediately available as a competitive factor.

When we turn to the questions of equipment, managerial and labor efficiency, and industrial relations we find that the pendulum of advantage has swung back and forth. There is little doubt but that Southern mills have in the past been quicker to adopt innovations and new principles in the field of equipment than have the New England mills. For one thing, the Southern mill interests have been newer in the field and for a long time did not develop hard-set

ideas on methods of manufacture and procedure. They were newcomers in an old-established industry and they realized that to overcome the experience-advantage of New England every ingenuity must be exercised and every possibility of gain explored. The New England mills had long traditions of operation and family management which did not yield their places easily. Perhaps as a whole, the early Southern mill managers were behind their New England rivals in their grasp of technical detail, but they were ahead in initiative and ambitious drive and their technical excellence came later or was bought in the market. The influence of family and of tradition in New England was strengthened by the fact that the necessity for change and aggressive management did not face the New England mill official with the same impelling necessity that it did the Southern brother. One of the major changes in mill equipment which spread apace in the South and to a much lesser extent in New England after 1900 was the adoption of the automatic loom. But in the better grade of goods, to which New England was increasingly turning at this time, the margin of savings was much less than in the coarser grades in which the South specialized, so that the incentive to change was less. Further, the already established New England mill had equipment already on hand, while the Southern mill was just being organized or expanded so that the installation of the most up-to-date looms was more or less taken as a matter of course. Finally, it must be remembered that, till after the First World War, the New England section of the industry remained profitable on the whole, and preferred the evidences of the existing prosperity to what seemed only unnecessary and excessive precautions for the future. When New England really ran into difficulties in the twenties it was too late. As one New Bedford mill treasurer put it, in speaking of the failure to keep technologically up-to-date, "When we were making money and could have put in new equipment, we didn't think it was necessary. Now that we're losing money and need new machinery to keep going—we just haven't got the price."

At the present time the differences in the equipment and management of the New England and Southern mills are slight or non-existent. The New England industry has been put through the wringer and the survivors, with few exceptions, are the best equipped and best managed—they had to be. The Southern industry is also older now. The effects of family management and control have had a chance to bring many Southern mills into the same unenviable position that New England mills were in formerly. Receiverships and overhauls



are now no novelty in the South. At the same time the improvements in manufacturing processes in the twenties, the increased age of machinery in Southern mills, and the intensification of competition have reacted in the same way upon the less efficient Southern managements as they did in New England. Even the semideserted mill town, the shell of a community which depended upon a now-closed cotton mill, has made its appearance in the South.

Just as Southern mills formerly had a considerable advantage over New England in the up-to-date character of their mechanical equipment, which is now on about equal terms, so the South formerly had a disadvantage in the experience and efficiency of its workers which the passage of years has cured. The early Southern mills had to train their labor forces where the New England mill had experienced workers easily available. The Southern small farmer, renter, and mountaineer who brought his family to work in the newly established mills brought willing hands but nothing else. The task of training these people not only to the individual tasks within the mill, but to the regular hours and discipline of factory life fell to the mill owner. As might be expected, it was many years before there existed in the Southern mill regions any considerable body of experienced workers who could supply the growing industry with the nuclei of help needed for the new and expanding mills. As a matter of fact, the early years of the present century saw outbreaks of intensive competition for workers and "help stealing," as it was called, became one of the Southern mill owner's chief worries for a few years. By the end of the First World War such conditions were alleviated in the main centers of cotton manufacturing in the South and, in comparable lines of work, the Southern operative was the equal of the New England worker. Up to the present war period there has been no lack of experienced workers in either region and mill owners with practical experience in both regions find no marked differences of efficiency between the New England and the Southern mill operatives. The attraction of better-paying defense industries is operating in both regions, but because of its recency this factor of the labor situation cannot be clearly analyzed as yet.

Thus far the discussion of the factors of advantage and disadvantage which have entered into the competition between New England and the South has covered the questions of protective labor legislation, taxes and mill village costs, freight costs on raw materials and finished goods, power and building costs, equipment and management, and labor supply and efficiency. The most important factor in

this regional competition, however, has not yet been mentioned. The one item in cost of manufacture in which the South has had a permanent and continuing advantage has been lower wage rates. The extent to which Southern wage rates have been below those of New England will be explored in detail in a later chapter. For the present it suffices to note that, of the advantages which the South has, at one time or another, possessed over New England, the movement of inter-regional competition along the scale has been decided not to any important degree by any of the factors already mentioned, but by the lower wage rate of the South. The relative weight of all the factors in the competition may not be exactly defined, but studies of comparative costs indicate that the principal source of the South's advantage has been a lower labor cost arising out of lower wage scales. Of the total favorable margin which the South possesses in terms of lower manufacturing costs, lower labor costs account for over 60 per cent.<sup>25</sup> Though other factors have also played their part, it is essentially this difference in labor costs, a difference mainly of wage rates, that has enabled the South to attain and keep the position of pre-dominance it holds today.

And just as the Piedmont area of the South overcame New England in the interregional battle, so the Southern areas west of Alabama now advertise their wares of even cheaper labor to add a further unsettling factor to the already harassed industry. "It is discouraging to proponents of stability in the industry to realize that Texas and the Southwest now look at the Piedmont in the same light in which the Piedmont once looked at New England and are prepared to wage aggressive chamber-of-commerce warfare to invite the mills to their cheaper labor."<sup>26</sup> This, in brief, aptly characterizes the story of the Southern mills' triumph over New England and of one Southern mill over another—a struggle waged with cheap labor as the chief weapon before the passage in 1938 of the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act.<sup>27</sup>

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER

<sup>1</sup> For an account of the industry before 1900 see this author's *Labor in the Cotton Mill 1865-1900*, M. A. thesis in the Burgess Library of Columbia University; for a detailed study of the Southern beginnings see *The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South*, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> Cabinet Committee, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> *Industrial Structure of New England*, *op. cit.*, pp. 281 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Copeland, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>5</sup> *The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South*, *op. cit.*, *passim*; *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill*, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

<sup>6</sup> Massachusetts, Department of Labor and Industries, *Report of a Special Investigation into Conditions in the Textile Industry in Massachusetts and the Southern States*, submitted to the Governor in August, 1923, printed by the Arkwright Club, Boston, pp. 17-18. Hereinafter cited as *Massachusetts, Report 1923*.

<sup>7</sup> Burgy, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-30.

<sup>8</sup> Lemert, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

<sup>9</sup> *Census of Manufactures*, 1905, Part III, p. 27, 1914, Vol. II, pp. 36-38; 1900 *Census*, Vol. IX, p. 45; 1910 *Census*, Vol. X, pp. 55-57; 1920 *Census*, Vol. X, pp. 176-7; Cabinet Committee, *op. cit.*, p. 46; *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, *op. cit.*, 1936, p. 785, 1938, p. 801, 1940, p. 860.

<sup>10</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>11</sup> *Census of Manufactures*, 1905, Part III, p. 29, 1914, Vol. II, pp. 21, 48, 1921, p. 201, 1923, p. 202, 1925, p. 234, 1927, p. 266, 1931, p. 225, 1933, p. 152, 1935, separate report, No. 9, p. 6, 1937, Part I, pp. 286-7; 1900 *Census*, Vol. IX, p. 32; 1910 *Census*, Vol. IX, p. 1213, Vol. X, pp. 38, 43; 1920 *Census*, Vol. X, p. 186; 1930 *Census, Manufactures*, Vol. II, p. 265; 1940 *Census, Manufactures*, separate report, *Cotton Manufactures*, pp. 2-4.

<sup>12</sup> See footnote 9 above; 1910 *Census*, Vol. X, p. 57; 1914 *Census of Manufactures*, Vol. II, p. 38; 1920 *Census*, Vol. X, p. 177.

<sup>13</sup> These figures are available only in terms of cotton crop years. Prior to 1915 the crop year comprised the 12 months ending August 31st of the given calendar year. Since 1915 the crop year comprises the 12 months ending July 31st of the given calendar year.

<sup>14</sup> Cabinet Committee, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>15</sup> U. S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1940*, pp. 859-60.

<sup>16</sup> Cabinet Committee, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-50.

<sup>17</sup> *Industrial Structure of New England*, *op. cit.*, p. 291; U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Hours and Earnings in Manufacture of Cotton Goods September, 1940 and April, 1941*, Serial No. R. 1414, p. 3 (reprinted from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Monthly Labor Review* for December, 1941).

<sup>18</sup> *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1940*, *op. cit.*, pp. 859-60.

<sup>19</sup> Cabinet Committee, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>20</sup> *Census of Manufactures*, 1921, p. 188, 1925, p. 236, 1933, p. 153, 1935, separate report, No. 9, p. 8; 1920 *Census*, Vol. X, p. 169; 1930 *Census, Manufactures*, Vol. II, p. 249.

<sup>21</sup> *Census of Manufactures*, 1905, Part III, p. 38, 1914, Vol. II, p. 35, 1931, pp. 243-4, 1935, separate report No. 9, pp. 32-3; 1920 *Census*, Vol. X, p. 173.

<sup>22</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>23</sup> Burgy, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

<sup>24</sup> Cabinet Committee, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

<sup>25</sup> Massachusetts, *Report 1923*, *op. cit.*, p. 18; Lemert, *op. cit.*, p. 174; *Hearings on S. Res. 49*, *op. cit.*, p. 37; Charles T. Main and Frank M. Gunby, "The Cotton Textile Industry," *Mechanical Engineering*, October, 1926, p. 1002.

<sup>26</sup> Vance, *op. cit.*, p. 297.

<sup>27</sup> Practically every book and article on the industry contains some reference to the factors which enter into the New England-Southern competition. To cite all of these is obviously impractical. In the bibliography will be found the titles of the main works.

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## 8 *WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN THE MILL*

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FROM THE earliest days of cotton manufacturing in this country, women have been an important part of the labor force. Indeed, in the eyes of advocates of industrialism one of the "virtues" of the cotton mill was that its technology permitted the use of large numbers of women and children and therefore men would not be drained away from the agricultural pursuits which were considered more desirable and beneficial to the nation than factory occupations. The wages were generally too low to attract the native males except for a few skilled operations and the early New England mills were largely staffed by women and children who, it was pointed out, would otherwise be idle and a burden to their families and the community. The influx of immigrants in the 1840's and fifties changed this picture. The native operatives were dissatisfied with labor conditions and had already begun to branch out into the increasing opportunities in other lines.<sup>1</sup> Their places were taken by the newcomers, and male immigrants started to enter the mills along with the women. Thus began a decline in the proportion of women in the mill labor force which lowered the percentage of women from 64 per cent of the adult operatives in 1850 to less than 50 per cent in 1900.

In this decline, some role was played by technological changes. In 1866 a new yarn-sizing machine resulted in the replacement of women by men because operation of the new apparatus was too exhausting for women.<sup>2</sup> In the same period the use of heavier and faster machinery for carding and weaving likewise tended to decrease the proportion of women in the mill.<sup>3</sup> A counteracting factor, however, in this period before 1900 was the advance of ring spinning as against mule spinning. Mule spinning was a skilled monopoly of the males, while ring spinning was easily learned by women and children.<sup>4</sup> Though ring spinning had been invented back in 1828 and the majority of the country's spindles were ring spindles by 1860, the real advance came after 1871 when ring spinning was adapted to high-speed operations.<sup>5</sup> By 1890 there were approximately 8.8 million ring spindles in this country as against 5.3 million mule spindles and in the following decade the

number of mule spindles remained practically stationary while ring spindles increased by 5 million. By 1914 the number of mule spindles had declined by over one-third since 1900,<sup>6</sup> and today mule spinning is practically extinct. The change in spinning methods was accelerated by the unionization of the mule spinners who tied up mills in strikes while plants with ring spinning were able to continue to operate because the women were unorganized.<sup>7</sup> The net result of these changes in technology seems to have been that the movements in one direction were counteracted by movements in the other direction so that the proportion of women in the cotton mill has been mainly determined by other factors. The rapid growth of the industry was in itself outstripping the supply of available women before 1900. This was especially noticeable in the South where the decline in the proportion of women was greater than in New England. Mill work is suited to deft fingers and the older men and women from Southern farms were unable to learn quickly enough. For employers, this had the effect of reducing the available labor supply in that region to those between the ages of 16 and 25 who were able to qualify as beginners.<sup>8</sup>

Wherever the mill owners had a choice, however, they preferred women and children to men as employees. They believed the former to be more tractable and reliable, cheaper, more industrious, more rapid, neater, more careful and less likely to strike.<sup>9</sup> Whether the women workers in cotton mills are actually underpaid in comparison with the wages paid to men is difficult to determine. The earnings of the women are generally less than those of the men for they are in the lower-paid occupations, but whether their wage rates are less in relation to their work is another problem. Lack of careful equation of efficiency, quantitative and qualitative, makes comparison with male earnings of doubtful value.<sup>10</sup> Over one-third of the work in the cotton mill is on a piecework or piece-time combination basis<sup>11</sup> and there is usually no difference in these wage rates for women and men on identical operations.

Since 1900 the proportion of women in New England mills has undergone minor fluctuations, but very little change has actually taken place. The decline in child labor in New England between 1900 and 1930 has been compensated for mostly by the increased use of men. In the South the proportion of women continued to decline until 1914, while the decrease in the proportion of children was made up by advances in the percentage of men. After 1914 the proportion of children in the Southern mill force declined still further, but now the proportion of women increased along with that of the men.<sup>12</sup>

Since its very beginnings, both in this country and abroad, the

textile industry has been a large employer of women—actually it was the largest source of factory employment for women in this country at the opening of the present century and the largest subgroup of textiles was cotton manufacturing.<sup>13</sup> The reasons are not far to seek. Abroad, the tradition of women's work in textiles was heavily endowed by the centuries of household manufacture preceding the rise of the modern factory system. In this country, the tradition was no less strong and was aided by the feeling that the development of industrialism should not interfere with agriculture by diminishing its supply of manpower. The work of the women in the household manufacture system was characteristically deemed of little value and was remunerated accordingly—and textiles became a low-wage industry in all countries at all times. It became a low-wage industry because of its many women, and many women were engaged in textile work because the male family head did not provide a tolerable existence for the family out of his wage alone. Thus was the circle completed.

Whether or not the wife in any particular household will go to work is, of course, a matter of individual circumstance. Many factors, such as husband's income, the number of children and their age, as well as the personal equation will enter into the decision. For New England and the South combined, the percentage of female operatives who were married rose from 29 per cent in 1907-8 to 44 per cent in 1930—a considerable increase. The increase was somewhat unevenly distributed between the regions, with the South showing a greater relative increase in the proportion of married women in the labor force than New England.<sup>14</sup>

Comparatively few of the female operatives lived away from their natural family household, for their earnings were needed at home. At the beginning of the century, 80 per cent or more of the women lived at home,<sup>15</sup> and in the early twenties over 95 per cent of the women workers studied by the U.S. Women's Bureau lived with their immediate families or relatives.<sup>16</sup> For the married women, of course, this would be natural in any event. But data on family income show that female children over 16 who were unmarried were heavy contributors to the family funds. In 1907-8 over 90 per cent of the earnings of female children over 16 in New England and 89 per cent of the earnings of this group in the South went into the family fund.<sup>17</sup> Detailed data for New England mill families between 1907 and 1909 show that the average husband contributed only 54 per cent of the total family income, the wife contributed 7 per cent, while the children contributed 29 per cent;<sup>18</sup> and among the latter are found most of the single females who at this time were almost two-thirds of the female cotton

mill operatives. Less than one-third of the husbands supported their families on their earnings alone, the proportion being highest among the native-born husbands and lowest among the foreign-born. The proportion of wives employed was much greater among the foreign-born than among the native-born, while irrespective of race or nativity the proportion of wives employed decreased with the increase in the earnings of the husband.<sup>19</sup> Which sums up to the fact that the husband's earnings were insufficient, so that his wife and children contributed to the family income; and the greater the deficiency the more important were the contributions. The "family wage" system was in full operation.

The undesirable social effects of the wife working to make ends meet have been the subject of many articles. The disorganization of normal family life and the lack of adequate supervision of the children are the inevitable concomitants of the working mother. In the early twenties 28 per cent of the women working in the mills were mothers as well as breadwinners.<sup>20</sup> The children born to the working mothers were not as healthy and had a higher death rate than those born of nonworking mothers.<sup>21</sup> A study of North Carolina mill families in 1926-7, showed that a large percentage of juvenile delinquency cases were from homes disorganized by the fact that the mother was at work in the mill and consequently had little time to care for or discipline the children.<sup>22</sup> Nor is the work of the female cotton operative a transitory episode before marriage. A 1922 survey showed that in Northern mills 35 per cent of the total number of women had been working on and off in cotton mills for 15 years or more and 25 per cent of the total number of women had spent 15 years or more of actual working time in the cotton mills. In Southern cotton mills the percentages were 29 and 17, respectively.<sup>23</sup> The women were part of the family labor system. Necessity made them workers and kept them so.

The story of the establishment of the cotton manufacturing industry in this country is the story of the labor of men, women and children. The heavy emphasis on the labor of women has already been discussed in some detail above. The same economic factors which encouraged the use of women in the mills acted to put the children into the mill. At the beginning of the present century over 10 per cent of the New England and almost 30 per cent of the Southern cotton mill operatives were less than 16 years old. This was a decline from the proportion of previous years in New England, but an increase in the rapidly developing Southern area. In the absolute figures, which are perhaps more impressive, New England employed over 13,000 children in 1900 while the South went over the 25,000 mark.<sup>24</sup> How-

ever, even these figures are somewhat of an underestimate. The census does not list those under 10 years of age though it appears that even children so young were found in Southern mills. The youngest usually came as "helpers" to the older children or their parents and did not appear in the payroll so that they were not counted. This was a common method of "breaking in" the children to mill work which has only gradually died out.<sup>25</sup> The same device was used to conceal the labor of children who were, according to state law, too young to work.<sup>26</sup> As late as 1922 this was happening in South Carolina.<sup>27</sup> These children were not on the payroll and so were not reported as cotton mill employees at all, thus adding to the deficiencies of the official figures.

Since 1900 both the proportion and the number of children employed in the mills have declined. The largest drop took place in the South between 1910 and 1920. Under the influence of federal child labor legislation the number of children employed in Southern mills in 1920 fell to less than one-third of the 1910 figure. The South never went back to the 1910 figure even after the federal legislation was invalidated. The New England decline has been more gradual than that of the South. By 1930 children constituted 1 per cent of the New England and 4 per cent of the Southern operatives—which represented over 1,200 children for New England and over 6,800 children for the South. After 1930 there was a further decline in child labor until the National Industry Recovery Act Cotton Textile Code absolutely prohibited the employment of children under 16 years.<sup>28</sup> With the invalidation of the NIRA, the re-employment of children began in a very limited degree. Such employment probably never regained the 1930 level, or even the status of the period just before the Cotton Textile Code went into effect.<sup>29</sup> The passage of the Public Contracts Act of 1936 (Walsh-Healey Act) and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 once again placed federal restrictions in the way of the employment of children.

Within the group of workers 10 years old but under 16 (which we have called child laborers), the balance of younger and older children has shifted since 1900. In 1900 there were many children less than 14 years old employed in the mills. In New England over 16 per cent of the children were 10-13 years old, while in the South almost 59 per cent of the children were in this age group. This, of course, omits the "helpers" who were noted above and those whose ages were incorrectly reported or not reported at all, but even these figures are startling. The percentage of the children who were 10-13 years old declined sharply in New England between 1900 and 1910 and showed



only minor changes thereafter. It was not until the advent of federal child labor legislation that the proportion of children 10-13 employed in the South dropped abruptly from 42 per cent in 1900 to 4 per cent in 1920. At the other end of the scale in 1900, one-half the children in New England mills were at least 15 years old while in 1930 three-quarters of the children were at this age level. And in the South, where only 21 per cent of the children were 15 years old in 1900, almost 70 per cent were of this age in 1930.<sup>30</sup>

Legislation, technological change, and the advance in the concepts of what constituted family and social welfare, all played their role in this shift away from the employment of young children, to the use of older children, and then to the practical abolition of child labor in the cotton mills of this country.

The most obvious factor in the decline of child labor has been state and federal legislation. First in chronological order have been the efforts of the individual states to control child labor within their borders. State legislation has been of three types: that which covered all employees in the cotton mill, that regulating directly the ages and hours of the legally defined child in the mill, and that which through a combination of age and educational requirements has attempted to restrict the supply of legally defined children available for work in the mills.

Before the end of the Civil War, two New England states and Georgia passed declaratory laws<sup>31</sup> limiting the hours of labor of all mill employees, and several other New England states enacted laws regulating hours for children only.<sup>32</sup> These laws were mere expressions of faith since their wording either enabled employees to "contract out" of the restrictions and work longer hours, or their enforcement provisions were almost nonexistent. The 1848 Maine law and the 1847 New Hampshire law, for example, declared that no person should be "required" to work over 10 hours daily except in pursuance of a contract requiring longer hours.<sup>33</sup> When a person went to work in a mill which ran 12 hours daily he was considered to have made a contract for longer hours and the law did not restrict his hours because he had "contracted out" and was not being "required" to work 12 hours—he had voluntarily agreed and contracted to do so. Nevertheless, such state laws continued to be passed covering all mill workers even after the Civil War. In 1889 Georgia enacted an 11-hour daily and 66-hour weekly limit for all mill operatives, which made all contracts for longer hours void, and in 1892 South Carolina set similar limits.<sup>34</sup>

All during the 1865-1900 period the New England states put on

their statute books a mass of unco-ordinated legislation which attacked the problem of child labor from the three aspects of hours, age limits, and educational and literacy requirements. The progress was not steady, for in some states previously established age limits and schooling standards were reduced, albeit the lapse was only temporary.<sup>35</sup> In the South before 1900, in addition to the hour limits for all employees in Georgia and South Carolina noted above, Alabama enacted a short-lived hours law for minors. The Alabama 1887 age and hour limits were repealed in 1894,<sup>36</sup> purportedly at the instigation of Massachusetts mill owners who promised to establish mills in Alabama. This group was also credited with the defeat of an attempt to secure such legislation in 1900.<sup>37</sup> Child labor regulation in Georgia also received a setback in 1895 when the code revisers held that the 1889 law limiting labor to 66 hours a week superseded an 1853 law which prohibited the labor of minors under 21 at night—so that children could legally work at night provided the weekly limit was not exceeded.<sup>38</sup> Virginia enacted a law in 1890 limiting the labor of those under 14 years to 10 hours daily.<sup>39</sup>

Looking at the principal cotton manufacturing states of New England in 1900, we find that two states (Massachusetts and Connecticut) had basic minimum age requirements of 14 years, two others (Maine and Rhode Island) had 12-year limits, and one (New Hampshire) set a minimum of 10 years. Maine, Connecticut, and Rhode Island limited the labor of those under 16 years to 10 hours daily and 60 hours weekly, with the Maine restriction also applying to those under 18 in the case of females. These same hour limits were effective for all workers under 18 in New Hampshire, while Massachusetts law forbade those under 18 to labor more than 10 hours daily and 58 hours weekly. In addition, Massachusetts and Rhode Island prohibited night work by those under 18 and under 16, respectively, while all the aforementioned states had some form of educational or literacy requirement for the young workers.<sup>40</sup>

In 1900 none of the Southern states important in cotton manufacturing had any age limits, nor any restrictions on night work, nor any literacy or educational requirements for child workers. In Georgia and South Carolina the children's hours were limited to 11 daily and 66 weekly by the legislation which covered all mill workers. Virginia limited the hours of those under 14 years to 10 daily, while North Carolina and Alabama had no protective legislation whatever in 1900.<sup>41</sup>

By 1910 the age limits had been raised from 12 years to 14 years in Maine and Rhode Island, and from 10 years to 12 years in New

Hampshire, while the 14-year standards in Massachusetts and Connecticut remained unchanged. All the New England cotton manufacturing states, except Maine, also shortened the permissible weekly hours for minors, and all registered improvements in the educational requirements and enforcement provisions on their statute books.<sup>42</sup> The end of the first decade of the present century also saw the Southern cotton manufacturing states enter the field of child labor regulation, which had been untouched by permanent legislation except in Virginia. By 1910 there was a 12-year limit in Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina, a 13-year limit in North Carolina, and a 14-year minimum in Virginia. Night work was forbidden for young workers in all the aforementioned Southern states. Hours were limited to 66 weekly for those under 18 in North Carolina, while in Georgia and South Carolina the children were limited to 66 hours weekly and 11 hours daily under the legislation which applied to all mill workers. North Carolina, Georgia, and Virginia also made a start on educational requirements for their child workers in this decade.<sup>43</sup>

With all the important cotton manufacturing states in both sections active in the field of child labor legislation by 1910, the following three decades marked an expansion of these activities from the three angles of direct legislation on the ages and hours of children in the mill, the combination of age and educational requirements which restrict the supply of children available for the mill, and legislation covering all mill workers regardless of age. In both areas the legislatures moved toward better laws and better enforcement of existing statutes. In no state was there a sudden jump to advanced legislation. Rather do the numerous enactments<sup>44</sup> show a gradual approach to the problem of remedying deficiencies and extending the scope of the protective legislation.

At the present time there are 16-year limits in three New England states (Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Massachusetts) and two Southern states (North Carolina and South Carolina). There is a 15-year limit in Maine and a 14-year minimum in New Hampshire, among the New England states, while the latter limit is effective also in Virginia, Georgia, and Alabama. The hours of various groups of minors are limited to 8 to 10 daily and 48 weekly in all the New England states mentioned (except Maine, where the weekly limit is 54 hours), while in the Southern cotton manufacturing states the hours limits for minors run from 9 to 10 daily and from 44 to 60 weekly. All the important cotton manufacturing states in both regions control

night work, usually by direct prohibition for the youngest age groups and by limiting the hours of night work for other minors.

The formal provisions of the laws, however, are only a part of the question of child labor legislation. Though age limits may be raised and permissible hours shortened, the heart of the story lies more often in the enforcement of existing statutes, in the effort and the sincerity which go into the task of seeing that the law is obeyed. It is recognized today that the enforcement of the labor law is a specialized aspect of law enforcement which requires more than the ordinary policeman's technique. This recognition came but slowly, as an outgrowth of experience rather than of deliberate analysis, and accordingly the point of maturity was reached at different times in the various states important in cotton manufacturing.

The problems of enforcement were first faced in New England, where child labor legislation developed earlier than in the South. The first obstacle to enforcement arose in connection with laws which, because of their very wording were, for all practical purposes, unenforceable. Such laws were those whose penalties for violation could be imposed only where it was proved that the mill had "knowingly and willfully" violated the law. To secure such proof was virtually impossible and these exonerating provisions were removed from all New England state laws before 1900. A second difficulty which also bulked large in the early laws was that of definition of employment. Laws which forbade the "employment" of children under certain ages, or restricted the labor of these children, were evaded by the simple device of omitting the name of the child from the payroll and maintaining that the child at work in the mill was merely "helping" a parent or older child and was not "employed" by the mill. Changes in wording sent this loophole the way of the "knowingly and willfully" provision. At the beginning of the present century the New England cotton manufacturing states had laws which, judging by the bare provisions, were clearly enforceable. But one thing was still lacking to make the laws truly effective.

The missing section of the picture was a specialized enforcement machinery buttressed by ample powers of inquiry and prosecution combined with a judiciary which would put the enforcement of the labor law on a par with that of other laws. The first state labor inspectors in the country were appointed to enforce the child labor laws in Massachusetts in 1867 and in Connecticut in 1869.<sup>45</sup> Though Massachusetts was the farthest advanced of the New England states in its enforcement machinery, even here deficiencies were obvious. The

chief of the Massachusetts state police spoke in 1890 of the difficulty of securing evidence which would satisfy the courts and in the eighties and nineties there were numerous reports of the illegal employment of young children and the violation of the hour laws for children.<sup>46</sup> If this was the situation in Massachusetts around the turn of the century, conditions in the other New England cotton manufacturing states at the same time were certainly worse. A survey of the enforcement of child labor laws made just before the end of the first decade of the twentieth century gives a good picture of the situation. Over one-third of the New England cotton mills investigated in 1908 were employing children at ages below those set by the state laws on child labor. Massachusetts had the smallest proportion of mills recorded as violators (5 per cent), while in Maine every mill visited was breaking the law.<sup>47</sup> In this survey violations were considered such only when the child was admitted to be under legal age or was proved so by investigation. It is apparent, therefore, that these figures really represent the minimum volume of violations at this time. In many cases children who, judging by appearance and development, were believed to be under legal age had to be listed as over the age limit because nonco-operation of parents foiled the effort to prove the real age of the child.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, this records only proved violations of the law on minimum age for child workers. Other aspects of regulation, such as that requiring properly issued work certificates, showed even more violations than that of the age requirement.<sup>49</sup>

The data given above reflect the insufficient attention given to the enforcement of the child labor laws by the state governments of the New England states except Massachusetts. Maine, at this time, had but one factory inspector to cover the entire state, while the enforcement of the education law which was supposed to supplement the child labor law actually conflicted with the latter on certain points and was furthermore subjected to varying interpretations by the numerous local school authorities. In New Hampshire there was no factory inspector at all and enforcement rested with school authorities, who had other work to do, and with truant officers. The result was that practically the only penalty for mills employing children illegally was the removal of the children to the schoolhouse. In Rhode Island the factory inspectors were required to inspect annually all factories in the state, and the truant officers, who formerly were responsible for the enforcement of the child labor law as such, seem to have been edged out of the enforcement picture. The proportion of establishments which were shown to be violating the age law indicates that the

three inspectors for this state could not adequately cover all the factories in the course of the year.<sup>50</sup>

While enforcement of the child labor laws in New England at the end of the first decade of the present century left much to be desired, it would be erroneous to speak of any enforcement at all in connection with the Southern laws of this period. In 1900 none of the Southern states important in cotton manufacturing had any age restrictions for the employment of children in the mills and the three which limited the hours of children under the laws covering all mill employees or under laws for women and children had no enforcement machinery whatever. The children worked as long as the adults, and the adults worked beyond the legal maxima in the few cases where a maximum did exist in law.<sup>51</sup>

The Southern states started their child labor legislation after 1900, but by 1910 not much more than the mere passage of laws had been achieved. The 1903 laws of South Carolina and Alabama and the 1903 and 1907 laws of North Carolina had absolutely no provision for enforcement outside the general already-established law enforcement agencies of the state. The Georgia law of 1906 was in practically the same class as those of South Carolina, Alabama, and North Carolina. Only South Carolina in its 1909 law, Alabama in its 1907 law, and Virginia by its 1906 law made any provision, however inadequate, for inspection in this period.<sup>52</sup> The net result of the lack of provisions for enforcement stands out clearly. Altogether, almost three-quarters of the Southern mills investigated in 1907-8 were violating the age limits set by state laws.<sup>53</sup> These data are comparable to those given above for the New England states, so that the same comments apply here—indicating that the above figures are to be taken as the minimum extent of violation. The statistical evidence was supported by contemporary comment,<sup>54</sup> and though no Southern state in 1910 had any age-proof requirement worthy of the name,<sup>55</sup> a ray of hope existed in the fact that three of the states had at least recognized the need for factory inspection.<sup>56</sup>

After 1910 both New England and the Southern states continued to advance, at varying speeds, in the provisions and enforcement of their child labor laws. New England, being further advanced than the South at the end of the first decade of the present century, in the sense that limitations on the employment of children were on the average stricter and enforcement much better, continued to hold its lead. Between 1910 and 1941 the legislatures of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island all together acted

over fifty times on the subject of child labor and in practically every case some improvement was effected in the laws and their enforcement. Age limits were raised and co-ordinated with the requirements of the education law. Hours were further curtailed and night work curbed. Age-proofs were made more exacting, and various exemptions and loopholes in the laws were removed, and enforcement facilitated by hour-posting regulations. In the rare instances in which the law seemed to move backwards, such as was the case in Maine when the 1915 law prohibiting nightwork for those under 16 years was suspended by a referendum petition, the breach was quickly repaired when the people of Maine, in 1916, voted the law back into existence before much damage had been done. This is not to say that the New England laws achieved perfection before federal legislation intervened, for there was evasion and violation even in Massachusetts.<sup>57</sup> By and large, however, the New England states toward the end of the 1930's had adequate legislation which was well-enforced.<sup>58</sup>

The Southern states, unfortunately, did not progress so rapidly. Though the rate of growth of the Southern mills was far ahead of that of New England and they employed many more children, the legislatures of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama acted less than half as often as the lawmakers of New England on the subject of child labor in the years between 1910 and 1941. Part of the backwardness of the Southern states in the matter of child labor regulation lay in the failure of the legislatures to enact enforceable laws and part in the reluctance to provide the means and money necessary for enforcement where the law itself was adequate. In 1922 the South Carolina law still had the time-worn loophole which permitted parents or others to have "helpers" so long as they were not "employed" by the mill.<sup>59</sup> The annals of this state and of Georgia record the many violations and the difficulties of enforcement, accompanied by pleas for better laws and staffs to make them effective.<sup>60</sup> The situation was vividly put by the Alabama factory inspector, in 1912, when he said, "The laws pertaining to the employment of children in Alabama are conspicuous by their ambiguity, inefficiency, inexplicitness, and inadequacy."<sup>61</sup> The Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court commented on the inadequate legislation and enforcement in his native state.<sup>62</sup> All in all, by the end of the First World War, enforcement of child labor legislation was very inadequate and little progress had been made except in Alabama.<sup>63</sup>

The experiments with federal child labor legislation beginning in the war period brought some improvement in conditions in the

South.<sup>64</sup> The invalidation of the federal child labor law in 1922 saw the Southern mills slip back not only below the standards that had been set in the two federal laws but below the standards of their own states as well.<sup>65</sup> The twenties saw little legislation on child labor in Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama, in spite of the inadequacies of the laws, though the need for complete overhauling was evidenced by state reports.<sup>66</sup> Enforcement of existing laws was hampered by the failure to provide adequate funds even in Alabama<sup>67</sup> which, together with Virginia, was farther ahead in the scope of their laws and in enforcement than the other Southern textile states.<sup>68</sup> Contemporary comment supports official reports in indicating that child labor legislation and enforcement in the South by the end of the 1930's, though improved since the first efforts early in the present century, still left much to be desired.<sup>69</sup> The only aspect of child labor control in which marked progress had been made was in connection with proof-of-age requirements for employment. At the beginning of 1940 the United States Children's Bureau, which is administering the child labor provisions of the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act, had accepted the age-proofs of all the important cotton mill states in both New England and the South.<sup>70</sup>

While the states were struggling with the problem of controlling child labor in the mills and with the headache of different regulations in competing states, the federal government decided to try its own hand in the broth which already had many cooks. The first attempt came in a law which was approved in September, 1916, and became effective just one year later. This law<sup>71</sup> forbade the shipment in interstate commerce of goods made in plants employing children under 14 years or which employed children 14 to 16 years more than 8 hours daily or 6 days per week or between 7 P.M. and 6 A.M. Little time was lost by the opponents of the bill in attacking its constitutionality in the courts. On June 3, 1918, in the case of *Hammer v. Dagenhart*,<sup>72</sup> the United States Supreme Court held the act to be an undue extension of the commerce clause of the Constitution and therefore unconstitutional. The second attempt at federal regulation came in a law approved and made effective in the early spring of 1919,<sup>73</sup> which placed a tax on the net profits of plants which employed children below the same standards which had been set in the 1916 law. The effectiveness of this law had been nullified by injunction in several districts before the United States Supreme Court dealt the final blow on May 15, 1922, in the case of *Bailey v. Drexel Furniture Co.*<sup>74</sup> The court held that the law, though drawn in the form of a tax law, was really regulatory in



purpose and could not be made the vehicle of legislating on child labor.<sup>75</sup> Thus ended, temporarily, the first phase of the attempt by the federal government to control child labor. While the laws were in effect, the federal government brought its machinery into play to see that the law was enforced. Where possible, existing state enforcement mechanisms were used, but federal age certificates had to be used in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Virginia, because standards here were far below those set in federal practice. When the federal laws were invalidated, the Southern mills went back to violating not only the former federal standards but their own lower state standards as well.<sup>76</sup>

The fight was not ended just yet, however, for if Congress did not have the right to legislate on child labor there was nothing to prevent it from trying to acquire that right through an amendment to the Constitution. On June 2, 1924, Congress approved a resolution<sup>77</sup> which if ratified by three-fourths of the states would give Congress the power "to limit, regulate, and prohibit the labor of persons under 18 years of age." The proposed amendment fared badly at the hands of the states. Georgia became the first state to reject the amendment and boasted of her accomplishment<sup>78</sup> in beating the others to the kill. By 1926 the amendment had been turned down by seven more states (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia) important in cotton manufacturing.<sup>79</sup> Not until 1933 did any important cotton mill states ratify the amendment, when Maine and New Hampshire reversed their previous actions. Up to July, 1941, these two states remained alone among cotton manufacturing states in their approval of the amendment.<sup>80</sup>

While the states were moving slowly on the question of amending the Constitution and the other cotton mill states showed no disposition to join Maine and New Hampshire among the twenty-eight states that had, by July, 1941, ratified the amendment,<sup>81</sup> the federal government went ahead on other lines. Under the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, the cotton textile industry became the first codified industry. Although the code, as first formulated by the employers, did not specifically ban child labor, on the ground that the wage minimum itself would make child labor unprofitable, such a provision was inserted at the urging of the New York Child Labor Committee and other interested parties.<sup>82</sup> Thus, the code which went into effect on July 17, 1933, contained a prohibition of the employment of any person under the age of 16 years.<sup>83</sup> This prohibition remained in effect almost two years when, on May 27, 1935, the National Industrial Recovery

Act was invalidated by the United States Supreme Court and the industry was again left with only its state laws to control child labor.

A partial federal control was interposed the next year, when Congress passed the Walsh-Healey Public Contracts Act. For employees of mills that hold federal contracts for goods in excess of \$10,000, this act limits hours to 8 daily and 40 weekly, requires overtime rates of one and one-half times basic hourly pay beyond these limits, and also prohibits the employment of males under 16 and females under 18. It also permits the Secretary of Labor to set minimum wages for individual industries, though this has not yet been done in cotton textiles. An attempt by the Cotton-Textile Institute to secure an exemption from the hour limits failed,<sup>84</sup> but permission was obtained, on May 4, 1937, to continue in employment girls who were between 16 and 18 years, and who were in the employ of the mill on October 15, 1936, provided they were not employed at night.<sup>85</sup>

The Walsh-Healey Act, however, only applied to government contract holders and to only the larger contracts, so that the final achievement of national uniformity on age limitation was yet to come. This last step was taken in 1938. The Federal Fair Labor Standards Act<sup>86</sup> was approved on June 25, 1938, and became effective on October 24th of the same year. For all employees in industries producing goods for interstate commerce (which, of course, includes cotton mills) the standard work week was limited to 44 hours in the first year of operation of the law, to 42 hours from October, 1939, to October, 1940, and to 40 hours thereafter, and time-and-one-half must be paid for all time worked in excess of these standard weekly hours. Specific provisions for children, which affect cotton mills, absolutely prohibit the employment of children under 16 years of age and exclude children of 16 and 17 years from hazardous occupations. So far none of the cotton mill occupations have been declared hazardous for the latter group, although some 16- and 17-year-old children may have been affected by the declaration that driving or helping on motor vehicles used in industries covered by the act was hazardous.<sup>87</sup> Thus ended successfully, for the time being at least, the struggle of the federal government to control child labor in industries in interstate commerce—a struggle which began more than twenty years before the final passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act.

The legislation on child labor which we have discussed above is, however, only part of the story of the decline of the employment of children in American cotton mills. Legislatures do not act in a vacuum, nor do they proceed on some principle of abstract justice. The child

labor laws, both state and federal, were enacted in an economic and social milieu which produced vigorous fighters for this legislation from the ranks of labor unions and liberal groups and equally vigorous opponents from the mill owners and manufacturers' associations. And while the pros and cons were debated in the legislative chambers, technological change, progress in family and social attitudes, the status of unionism, and even the housing system were all acting on the problem of child labor so that often the action of the lawmakers seemed merely to ratify the changes which these other factors were producing.

In New England the proponents of child labor legislation had, by 1900, triumphed over the opposition of the mill owners.<sup>88</sup> The efforts of the unions (both in textiles and in other fields) combined with that of the liberal groups interested in education and welfare legislation had by this time firmly established the principles of the restriction of the labor of children for the benefit not only of the children themselves but of society as a whole. Of course, as we have noted above, the administration and enforcement of the New England laws, in 1900, still left much room for the improvements which came gradually later on. But it is important to note<sup>89</sup> also that the number and proportion of children employed declined steadily from 1910 to 1930, irrespective of legislative enactments. It is apparent that the employment of children below 14 years of age dropped sharply under the influence of age legislation, but children 14 and 15 years old, whose employment was not prohibited, also declined. Indeed, after 1910, when the New England cotton manufacturing states had already established 14-year minimum age limits, the figures on the decline of child labor are almost entirely a story of the declining employment of these 14- and 15-year-olds. In this change the role of legislation was confined to making the employment of children under 16 years relatively inconvenient because of the shorter hours they were permitted to labor compared to the adults alongside of whom they worked. Of greater importance, in the gradual abandonment of the employment of children in New England cotton mills, were technological changes and progress in family attitudes toward the labor of children. The progressive Americanization of the New England mill force has meant fewer children in the mills because, as we noted above, the immigrant parents were more prone to send the children to work at an early age, while the child of native parents would be kept in school. Technological change and the constant increase in the speed of the machinery also meant that it has gradually become more and more difficult profit-

ably to utilize the labor of children. The tasks were getting beyond their strength and endurance. This was especially true in the twenties, but the trend is continuing. A further factor of importance, in New England, was the decline in the industry after the mid-twenties. By the time the 1930 Census was taken, the industry in New England had fallen far behind the South and with cotton mill employment opportunities contracting in every New England state, social pressure was strong to keep every available job for adults and to keep children out of the mills.

In the Southern cotton mill states, in 1900, the situation was much different from that in New England. At this time, the Southern competitors of New England had practically no child labor law and no enforcement of the few hour laws which covered children as well as adults. The movement for child labor legislation in the present century, indeed, had its roots in "an aroused conscience in the South in the face of the great growth of the child-employing textile industry."<sup>90</sup> The story of the struggle for child labor legislation in the South may be conveniently divided into three periods: the period before 1903; from 1903 to about the end of the First World War; and from the end of the war to the present.<sup>91</sup>

The period before 1903 was characterized by the bitter and practically unanimous opposition of Southern mill owners to any protective legislation for children. Such laws were called measures of labor unions and an opening wedge to complete labor legislation and the disruption of harmonious relations between the mills and their employees. In North Carolina a bill, which failed to pass, was introduced into the legislature, in 1887, which would have set a minimum age of 13 years. The prime mover in this case was the Knights of Labor and the opposition was frank in stating that the bill was objectionable because if the children couldn't work in the mill a great many people would be unable to support their families.<sup>92</sup> In 1888, 1891, 1893, 1895, and 1897 other child labor bills failed to pass in North Carolina—the opposition of the mill owners was too strong.<sup>93</sup> The number of children in the mills was increasing, however, and the movement for restriction grew, so that, in 1901, the North Carolina mill owners stalled off legislation only by a "gentlemen's agreement" not to employ children under 12 years while school was in session and to limit hours to 66 weekly. The agreement evidently meant little, for twenty out of the forty mill owners who advanced the agreement as a substitute for legislation, never signed the agreement at all, and school authorities reported that enrollment and attendance in the cotton mill counties

was far below the average for North Carolina as a whole.<sup>94</sup> In 1903 the governor of North Carolina recommended legislation on child labor, and the most the mill owners could do this time was to render the final bill as ineffective as possible—which they did.<sup>95</sup>

In other Southern states the story was similar. The arguments used by the mill owners were the same as those used by the opposition in New England fifty years earlier. One South Carolina mill owner called the 1901 bill in this state "a bill to discourage manufacturing in South Carolina"<sup>96</sup> and it was admitted by the mill owners that children under 12 years were the backbone of the spinning department.<sup>97</sup> In the following year the South Carolina mill owners set forth their position in an open letter to the legislature, in which they declared, "that the labor unions have seen an opportunity of availing themselves of public sentiment in order to strengthen themselves in the public estimation. We should see with regret the passage of any legislation which would be apparently a recognition of labor unions within the State."<sup>98</sup> They also declared their belief that the agitation for child labor legislation was "brought about by labor unions in New England aided and abetted by New England manufacturers seeking to stifle southern enterprises."<sup>99</sup> The projected laws were held not only unwanted by the mills, but by the children's parents as well, for the mills contended that they employed children only at the insistence of the parents. When a child labor law did happen to pass before 1900, as in Alabama, the mills persuaded the legislature to exempt the mill counties and finally succeeded in securing the outright repeal of the law.<sup>100</sup>

From 1903 to the end of the First World War the situation changed somewhat. The millmen's opposition was not as unanimous as previously, for a few mill officials did favor adequate legislation. But the tradition of standing together in all matters overwhelmed the latter, and the main change was in the tactics used against prospective legislation and accomplished enactments. The mills continued to use the same arguments against child labor legislation, but when it became evident that a bill had a good chance of passage they gave it public support and then worked for its defeat in the legislature or tried to cripple the bill by amendment and exceptions. A favorite device was to cut out provisions for factory inspectors and to provide very little for enforcement—thus ensuring inadequate enforcement. Another trick was to couch the law in terms which made enforcement a practical impossibility. Useful, also, was the coupling of compulsory education provisions with the child labor restrictions, for the mills realized that, due to the combined Negro-white schools at this time and due to the

extensive use of children in farm work, compulsory education was unpopular enough to defeat the entire bill. Compulsory education laws also were urged in place of age and hour restrictions, for the school terms were so short that they would be little hindrance to child labor. The ineffective voluntary "gentlemen's agreement" was used to forestall legislation and when this device did not work the mills would agree on compromise legislation and later try to prevent further legislation by claiming that their earlier agreement had been given as a part of a tacit undertaking that there should be no further legislation. When the federal child labor laws were passed over the bitter protest of the Southern mill owners who constituted almost the entire opposition<sup>101</sup> (and the lack of enforcement of Southern laws was an important factor in securing federal legislation), the Southern mill owners were instrumental in building up both of the court cases which led to the invalidation of the 1916 and 1919 laws. The traditional Southern "states' rights" arguments fitted in perfectly with the general opposition of the mill owners to child labor legislation, but their fight on state laws as well indicates that it was the provisions of the legislation that concerned them rather than any devotion in principle to states' rights.

Since the end of the First World War the opposition of the mill owners to state legislation has relaxed. The Southern mills had definitely won the battle with New England and the period in which the federal laws were in effect had demonstrated that child labor was not a prerequisite to successful mill operation. The fight on federal legislation in this field continued in full force, however, and the leading role in the rejection of the Child Labor Amendment by the states was played by the Southern mill owners operating in the guise of the "Farmers' States' Rights League, Inc."<sup>102</sup>

On the side of the advancement of child labor legislation in the South, the lead was in the hands of the National Child Labor Committee and its state committees. In contrast to New England, where the labor unions were in the forefront of the struggle for legislation, the unions in the South were very weak and often nonexistent in the cotton mills while not much stronger in other lines. Furthermore, the bitterness of the opposition of the mill owners toward anything smacking of "labor legislation" meant that a bill which went as a "welfare" or "humane" bill had a chance of passage, whereas the same bill marked as a "labor measure" would meet almost certain defeat. Indeed, one of the favorite tactical moves of the mill owners was to stigmatize a child labor bill as a labor union device to gain a foothold in Southern

manufacturing. The failure of the 1901 Georgia bill, for example, was attributable to the success of the mill owners in fastening the "labor" tag on the bill. On occasion, labor union support given openly did bring about passage, but on the whole, child labor legislation had its best chance of success when the support of organized labor was kept in the background.

The American Federation of Labor made its contribution to the cause of child labor legislation in the South not only by behind-the-scenes support, but by its success in enlisting the support of a woman who, though paid by the A.F. of L., could never be labeled as a "wild-eyed labor agitator." In 1900, Miss Irene Ashby, a young well-educated Englishwoman who was interested in social reform and who had organized the girls who worked for Sir Thomas Lipton, visited the United States. After some conversations with Samuel Gompers on the possibility of becoming an A.F. of L. organizer, Miss Ashby was retained by the A.F. of L. for the specific purpose of promoting child labor legislation in the South and she immediately headed for Alabama. The women's clubs of Birmingham had already discussed the need for child labor legislation and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union had made such legislation part of their program, but the movement lacked able and clear-sighted leadership. It was toward the organization of this leadership in each state that Miss Ashby devoted herself. Miss Ashby was well-equipped for the task which required the utmost tact in co-ordinating the efforts of the liberal, reform, and clerical groups while keeping in the background the organized labor support which was, nevertheless, a necessary part of the agitation. Through her education and middle-class background Miss Ashby was able to meet the conservatives on their own ground and social affairs were no small part of her duties. Many a convert to the cause was made over the tea and cookies.

Miss Ashby's first step on arriving in Alabama was to enlist the aid of the Reverend Edgar Gardner Murphy of Montgomery. Murphy was a relatively young man, just past thirty, who had long been interested in social reform and especially in race relations problems. In 1901 he resigned his pastorate to become secretary of the Southern Education Board. It was through Murphy that the support of several other prominent clergymen of the larger cities was mobilized, in a group which shortly became a state child labor committee. Murphy and Ashby were the backbone of the publicity drive for legislation in the Southern states, ably seconded by the Reverend Alexander J. McKelway, a North Carolina clergyman who was for a time editor of the

*Presbyterian Standard*. Through extensive travel, Miss Ashby collected much factual information on child labor in the cotton mills which had not been available heretofore, and her work remained alone in the field until 1910, when the publication of the "Report on the Condition of Women and Child Wage-Earners in the United States" began. When the 1901 Alabama bill was defeated largely through the efforts of a New England corporation which had a large plant in Alabama, the Alabama Child Labor Committee sent an appeal through the New England press and by pamphlet to arouse New England public opinion against the mill owners who were doing in the South what they could not do at home. Murphy wrote numerous pamphlets which were extensively circulated. Knowing well the prejudice of the South against unions and outsiders, Murphy emphasized the native interest in child labor legislation and even went so far as to declare that Miss Ashby had been invited to come south by the Ministers' Union of Montgomery and the W.C.T.U. of Alabama. In his efforts to keep the support of organized labor in the background, Murphy came into conflict with local labor leaders and a split was only averted when he succeeded in convincing Gompers that only in this way could legislation be secured.

The attitude of the mill operatives as a whole toward child labor legislation is difficult to determine. At the beginning of the present century there was very little evidence to indicate whether they favored or opposed such legislation. Whenever a child labor law was in prospect the legislatures received petitions from operatives both in favor of and against the proposed legislation. Whenever the textile unions appeared on the scene they campaigned against the use of children in the cotton mills, but there was little of unionism in the Southern mills for more than twenty-five of the first forty years of this century. There is ample evidence of the willingness of parents to connive with mill owners in putting children to work before the legal age and of the attempts of parents to evade the law even against the wishes of those mill officials who were in favor of the legal restrictions. This condition is understandable only by a reference to the origins of the mill workers and the economic conditions under which they labored. The early Southern cotton mill worker was an individualist to a very marked degree, one to whom the collective controls either of the state or of labor unions were distasteful. This individualism was a heritage of the farm life from which the mill family came—an influence which disappeared only very gradually. The farm left not only a heritage of individualism but a heritage of work habits



as well. On the farm all had labored for the family sustenance. Husband and wife and children—none were excused from useful labor. If all had worked on the farm, then why should not all work in the mill? The parents who moved their family to the mill saw no reason for their children not working there just as they had on the farm, so they were not loath to evade legal age limits when there were any. This farm habit of regarding the family as the working unit might have died out much more rapidly than it did, however, were it not for the powerful reinforcement it received from other sources.

The need of more than one wage earner to support the family was the first factor in the persistence of child labor. To make ends meet, the pay of more than the father was essential, and whether the choice fell on the wife or the children, or both, varied with the time and individual circumstances. That the child was chosen frequently is indicated by the figures on child labor already given. In many cases, the family which moved to the mill found no employment at all available for the father whose hands, gnarled by years of farm work, were unsuitable for the handling of cotton in process. The nimble fingers of women and children were needed and the father had to live on the labor of these rather than by his own work unless he was young enough for the mill to believe him worth the effort of retraining. If the father could not secure employment in the mill, there was nothing for him to do but live on the earnings of his wife and children. Several Southern mill states passed laws which attempted to deal with the nonworking, able-bodied father who lived on the labor of his wife and minor children, by making him subject to the vagrancy laws, but this problem of the transition from farm to mill was solved only by time itself.<sup>103</sup> That it was solved is indicated by the fact that in the mid-twenties over 97 per cent of the male heads of North Carolina mill families were employed.<sup>104</sup>

Added to the plain fact of economic necessity in the utilization of the labor of the children was the mill village system and the demand of the mill for labor. The mill village system was discussed fully above. It suffices here to note that under this setup the mill owns virtually all the housing facilities in the locality of the mill and the mill family secures a house from the mill at a low rental. The occupancy of the house, however, is conditioned on the continued employment in the mill. Practically speaking, with the mills located in rural regions and with the whole village built as part of the enterprise in a region where no other housing was available, the mill workers had no choice but to live in the mill houses on terms set by the mill man-

agement. With the Southern mills growing apace, each household was expected by the management to supply its quota of labor for the mill. The quota varied with the size of the house, but in every case more than one worker was required. Thus, to established habit and economic necessity was added employer pressure.

The above description of family attitudes and mill village necessities fits the situation up to about the early twenties. Then things began to happen which upset this picture. The data show that the 1920 Census recorded a tremendous drop from 1910 in the employment of children under 16 years. In 1920 the second federal child labor law was in effect, but the 1930 figures show a still further decline even though the federal controls had long since been removed. Why did not child labor return in force after the invalidation of the federal law in 1922? The Southern state legislation could hardly be called adequate or well-enforced, so the reasons must be sought largely outside the field of legal restriction. In the first place, the Southern mill family has grown away from its rural origins and consequently lost the rural habit of thought which made the family the natural working unit. Secondly, advances were made in family attitudes toward child labor and child labor legislation—over 60 per cent of the heads of North Carolina cotton mill families expressed themselves in favor of child labor legislation in the mid-twenties.<sup>105</sup> Third, the period of operation of the federal child labor laws had shown the mill owner that child labor was not the necessity it had been pictured and that the abolition of child labor would not harm the Southern mills in competition with New England. Fourth, the slowing up of the rate of growth of Southern cotton mills after the First World War meant less pressure for additional workers, and the increased mobility which the automobile brought meant that the mill village need no longer be the sole source of labor for the mill. Lastly, and most important, the development of scientific management in the cotton mills beginning in the twenties, and the increased speed of machinery and finer division of tasks which followed, leaves little room for the profitable employment of children. The new systems of work call for speed, endurance and concentration which are beyond the ability of children. The new conditions favor the employment of young workers, for the work requires nimbleness and good eyesight, and the peak of earning power is reached before 30. Cotton mill workers are pre-eminently a young group in comparison with those of other manufacturing and mechanical industries<sup>106</sup> but for the children proper no place is left.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER

<sup>1</sup> Edith Abbott, "History of the Employment of Women in American Cotton Mills," *Journal of Political Economy*, January, 1909, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Edith Abbott, "History of the Employment of Women in American Cotton Mills," *Journal of Political Economy*, November, 1908, p. 615; Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. IX, p. 57.

<sup>3</sup> Edith Abbott, "History of the Employment of Women in American Cotton Mills," *Journal of Political Economy*, November, 1908, p. 610; Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 32-34, Vol. IX, pp. 57-58; Copeland, *op. cit.*, p. 114; Stanley E. Howard, *The Movement of Wages in the Cotton Manufacturing Industry of New England Since 1860*, National Council of American Cotton Manufacturers, Boston, 1920, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 32-34; Carroll D. Wright, *Strikes in Massachusetts, 1830-1880* (1889 reprint from the Annual Report of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor for 1880), pp. 56-58.

<sup>5</sup> Kennedy, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 32-34; Clark, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 177-8.

<sup>7</sup> Wright, *op. cit.*, pp. 68-69.

<sup>8</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 35; *The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South*, *op. cit.*, p. 179, note 33.

<sup>9</sup> M. B. Hammond, "Women's Wages in Manual Work," *Political Science Quarterly*, September, 1900, p. 523; *Labor and Capital 1885*, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 36; Irene M. Ashby, "Child Labor in Southern Cotton Mills," *The World's Work*, October, 1901, p. 1294.

<sup>10</sup> M. B. Hammond, *Women's Wages in Manual Work* in John R. Commons (ed.), *Trade Unionism and Labor Problems*, Ginn & Co., New York, 1905, pp. 407-9.

<sup>11</sup> Serial No. R. 1414, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> *Appendix, Table VI.*

<sup>13</sup> 1900 Census, Special Reports, *Statistics of Women at Work*, p. 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Appendix, Table VII.*

<sup>15</sup> 1900 Census, Special Reports, *Statistics of Women at Work*, pp. 90-91; *Massachusetts Labor Bulletin*, *op. cit.*, May, 1901, pp. 64, 66.

<sup>16</sup> U. S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, *Lost Time and Labor Turnover in Cotton Mills*, Bulletin No. 52, Washington, 1926, p. 35.

<sup>17</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 436.

<sup>18</sup> Senate Document 633, *op. cit.*, Vol. 10, Part 3, 114.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 108, 110-11, 113-14.

<sup>20</sup> Women's Bureau, Bulletin No. 52, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>21</sup> Blanshard, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>22</sup> Rhyne, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-4.

<sup>23</sup> Women's Bureau, Bulletin No. 52, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>24</sup> *Appendix, Table VIII.*

<sup>25</sup> Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 16; Copeland, *op. cit.*, pp. 43, 113; W. J. Ghent, *Our Benevolent Feudalism*, Macmillan Co., New York, 1902, pp. 79-81.

<sup>26</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 189-91.

<sup>27</sup> South Carolina, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, Commerce, and Industry*, 1922, p. 20.

<sup>28</sup> North Carolina, *Biennial Report of the Department of Labor*, 1934-6, pp. 39, 43; South Carolina, *Annual Report of the Department of Labor*, June, 1936-7, p. 40; *Hearings on H.R. 9072*, *op. cit.*, p. 532.

<sup>29</sup> North Carolina, *Biennial Report of the Department of Labor*, 1934-6, pp. 39-43; South Carolina, *Annual Report of the Department of Labor*, June, 1936-7, pp. 39-40; *Hearings on H.R. 9072*, *op. cit.*, pp. 300-1; Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

<sup>30</sup> *Appendix, Table IX.*

<sup>31</sup> These were laws which merely stated that a certain number of hours were to be considered a day's work, in the absence of a contract for longer hours.

<sup>32</sup> U. S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, *Chronological Development of Labor Legislation for Women in the United States*, Bulletin No. 66-II, Washington, 1932, pp. 49, 77; Miriam E. Loughran, *The Historical Development of Child-Labor Legislation in the United States*, Catholic University of America, Washington, 1921, pp. 23-24.

<sup>33</sup> Women's Bureau, Bulletin No. 66-II, *op. cit.*, pp. 49, 77.

<sup>34</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, *The Beginnings of Child Labor Legislation in Certain States*, pp. 171-2; Georgia, *Acts and Resolutions of the General Assembly*, 1899, No. 599; South Carolina, *Acts, op. cit.*, 1892, No. 39.

<sup>35</sup> Loughran, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-21, 36-39, 51-55, 57-59.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>37</sup> Ashby, *op. cit.*, p. 1293; Murphy, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

<sup>38</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 171.

<sup>39</sup> Virginia, *Acts of the General Assembly*, 1889-90, ch. 193.

<sup>40</sup> Maine, *Acts, op. cit.*, 1887, ch. 139; Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 89; Loughran, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-21, 32-33, 36-42, 51-53, 73-75.

<sup>41</sup> Georgia, *Acts, op. cit.*, 1889, No. 599; South Carolina, *Acts, op. cit.*, 1892, No. 39; Virginia, *Acts, op. cit.*, 1889-90, ch. 193.

<sup>42</sup> Loughran, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-21, 32-33, 36-42, 51-53, 73-75; Rhode Island, *Acts and Resolves Passed by the General Assembly*, 1905, ch. 215.

<sup>43</sup> Davidson, *op. cit.*, pp. 49, 244-6, 275-8; *Massachusetts Labor Bulletin, op. cit.*, March, 1905, p. 35; Virginia, *Acts and Joint Resolutions of the General Assembly*, Extra Session, 1902-3-4, ch. 156.

<sup>44</sup> Loughran, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-21, 32-33, 36-42, 51-53, 73-75; Davidson, *op. cit.*, pp. 49, 244-6, 275-8; Maine, *Acts, op. cit.*, 1919, ch. 190, 1923, ch. 198, 1927, ch. 137, 1937, ch. 238; Massachusetts, *General Acts Passed by the General Assembly*, 1919, ch. 62, 76, 113, 281, 292, 311, 1921, ch. 341, 351, 1926, ch. 188, 1932, ch. 110; U. S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Handbook of Labor Statistics*, (1941 edition) Bulletin No. 694, Washington, 1942, Vol. I, p. 27; New Hampshire, *Laws*, 1919, ch. 84, 1921, ch. 85, sec. 16, 17, 21, 1937, ch. 36; Connecticut, *Public Acts*, 1919, ch. 195, 198, 264, 1921, ch. 188, 212, 259, 272, 1923, ch. 6, 1927, ch. 72, *Cumulative Supplement to the General Statutes, Revision of 1930*, January Sessions, 1931, 1933, 1935, ch. 279, sec. 1598c, 1600c; Rhode Island, *Public Laws Passed at the Sessions of the General Assembly*, 1922, ch. 2232, 1923, ch. 482, 1936, ch. 2360, 2426, *Acts, op. cit.*, 1928, ch. 1222, 1231; North Carolina, State Child Welfare Commission, *Handbook of Facts About the Employment of Children of North Carolina*, July, 1931, p. 19; in 1936 South Carolina passed a law setting limits of 8 hours daily and 40 weekly, to be effective if North Carolina and Georgia passed similar laws. The act remained inoperative because neither North Carolina nor Georgia acted. In 1938 South Carolina set the same limits on hours in a bill whose continued effectiveness was contingent on similar federal legislation being enacted before May 1, 1939. The Federal Fair Labor Standards Act was passed in 1938, but its 40-hour limit did not become effective until after May 1, 1939. The 1938 South Carolina law sets absolute limits of 8 hours daily and 40 weekly, with no provision for overtime work, but court injunctions have blocked the operation of the law. South Carolina, *Acts, op. cit.*, 1936, No. 832, 1938, No. 702; letter to this author from the South Carolina Department of Labor, February 21, 1941.

<sup>45</sup> John R. Commons and others, *History of Labor in the United States* (four volumes), Macmillan Co., New York, 1935 and 1936, Vol. III, Don D. Lescohier and Elizabeth Brandeis, *Working Conditions and Labor Legislation*, p. 403.

<sup>46</sup> U. S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, *History of Labor Legislation for Women in Three States*, Bulletin No. 66-I, Washington, 1932, pp. 21, 25; Knights of Labor, *The Journal of United Labor*, March 15, 1881, p. 103, April 15, 1881, p. 105; J. F. Crowell, "The Employment of Children," *Andover Review*, July, 1885, p. 43;

Clare De Graffenreid, "Child Labor," *American Economic Association Publications*, March, 1890, pp. 105-6.

<sup>47</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 147.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 154-6.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 156 ff.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 147, 166-70.

<sup>51</sup> Clare De Graffenreid, "The Condition of Wage-Earning Women," *Forum*, March, 1893, p. 75; American Federation of Labor, *American Federationist*, June, 1899, p. 77.

<sup>52</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 214, Vol. VI, pp. 210-12.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 171.

<sup>54</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 233-5; Massachusetts, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor*, 1905, p. 55; North Carolina, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor and Printing*, 1906, p. 257; South Carolina, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, Commerce, and Industry*, 1914, p. 4; A. J. McKelway, *Child Labor in Southern Cotton Mills*, National Child Labor Committee, 1906 (?), p. 3.

<sup>55</sup> Owen R. Lovejoy, *Seven Years of Child Labor Reform*, National Child Labor Committee, Pamphlet No. 161, New York City, 1911 (?), p. 8.

<sup>56</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 214-5.

<sup>57</sup> Fred E. Beal, *Proletarian Journey*, Hillman-Curl Inc., New York, 1937, p. 33; Grace Abbott, *The Child and the State* (two volumes), University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1938, Vol. I, pp. 461-8.

<sup>58</sup> A study of the development of enforcement machinery in one state is given in a recent work by Henry J. Crepeau, *Rhode Island: A History of Child Welfare Planning*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, 1941, ch. VI.

<sup>59</sup> South Carolina, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, Commerce, and Industry*, 1922, p. 20.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 1922, p. 20, 1917, p. 16-17; Georgia, *Annual Report of the Department of Commerce and Labor*, 1912, p. 8.

<sup>61</sup> Cited in Abbott, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 442.

<sup>62</sup> Commission on Industrial Relations, *Final Report and Testimony Submitted to Congress*, 64th Congress, 1st Session, Senate Document 415 (11 volumes), Vol. XI, p. 10456. Hereinafter cited as Industrial Relations Commission.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 1884, Vol. XI, pp. 10493-5; Abbott, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 461-8, 490; Theresa Wolfson, *Child Labor*, in *Child Welfare in North Carolina*, National Child Labor Committee, New York, 1918, p. 209; W. H. Swift, *Law and Administration*, in *Child Welfare in North Carolina*, *op. cit.*, p. 299.

<sup>64</sup> Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 211-2; Abbott, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 509-10; Wolfson, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

<sup>66</sup> Georgia, *Annual Report of the Department of Commerce and Labor*, 1924, p. 5; *Hearings on S. Res. 49*, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-14, citing the report of a committee of the South Carolina House of Representatives which investigated the South Carolina Department of Agriculture, Commerce, and Industry.

<sup>67</sup> Alabama, *Annual Report of the Department of Labor*, 1938, p. 19; Georgia, *Report of the Department of Commerce and Labor*, 1927-8, p. 3; U. S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, *Women's Place in Industry in 10 Southern States*, by Mary Anderson, Washington, 1931, pp. 7-8.

<sup>68</sup> Dabney, *op. cit.*, p. 318.

<sup>69</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 342-3; Blanshard, *op. cit.*, p. 14; *Hearings on S. Res. 49*, *op. cit.*, p. 3; Dunn and Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 93; Page, *op. cit.*, p. 62; William P. Jacobs, *Problems of the Cotton Manufacturer in South Carolina*, Jacobs & Co. Press [Clinton, S. C.], 1932, pp. 129-30; *Hearings on H.R. 9072*, *op. cit.*, pp. 273-4, 401-2; Charles W. Pipkin, *Social Legislation in the South*, Southern Policy Papers, No. 3, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1936, pp. 4, 5, 13; Charles W. Pipkin, *Social Legislation*, in Couch, *op. cit.*, p. 67; James Karl Coleman, *State Administration in South Carolina*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1935, pp. 179-85.

<sup>70</sup> *Wage and Hour Manual, op. cit.*, p. 322; letter to this author from the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor, November 20, 1940.

<sup>71</sup> 39 Stat. 675.

<sup>72</sup> 247 U.S. 251.

<sup>73</sup> 40 Stat. 1138.

<sup>74</sup> 259 U.S. 20.

<sup>75</sup> *Monthly Labor Review, op. cit.*, October, 1916, p. 31, July, 1918, p. 171, June, 1922, pp. 163-5, August, 1939, p. 376, June, 1919, p. 264.

<sup>76</sup> Abbott, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 490, 509-10; Davidson, *op. cit.*, pp. 211-2.

<sup>77</sup> H.J. Res. No. 184, 68th Congress: 43 Stat. 670, cited in *Monthly Labor Review, op. cit.*, August, 1939, p. 377.

<sup>78</sup> Georgia, *Annual Report of the Department of Commerce and Labor*, 1924, p. 5.

<sup>79</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Legislation of 1926*, Bulletin No. 434, Washington, 1927, p. 7.

<sup>80</sup> *Monthly Labor Review, op. cit.*, August, 1939, p. 377; Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 694, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 39-40.

<sup>81</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 694, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 39-40.

<sup>82</sup> Hugh S. Johnson, *The Blue Eagle from Egg to Earth*, Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., New York, 1935, pp. 232-3; *Statement of Cotton Textile Industry Committee*, at June 27, 1933 hearing on proposed code, in files of Cotton Textile Institute; *Report Submitted by Hugh S. Johnson*, N.R.A. Administrator, on July 9, 1933, to the President, re: hearings on the Cotton Textile Code, p. 9.

<sup>83</sup> National Recovery Administration, *Codes of Fair Competition* (23 volumes), Washington, 1933-5, Vol. I, pp. 15-18.

<sup>84</sup> *Textile Notes, op. cit.*, November, 1936.

<sup>85</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Division of Public Contracts, *Rulings and Interpretations under the Walsh-Healey Public Contracts Act*, No. 1, Washington, 1937, p. 12.

<sup>86</sup> Public No. 718, 75th Congress.

<sup>87</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Children's Bureau, *Child Labor Regulations*, Order #2, effective January 1, 1940, issued November 27, 1939.

<sup>88</sup> Industrial Relations Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 40.

<sup>89</sup> *Appendix, Tables VIII and IX.*

<sup>90</sup> Lescohier and Brandeis, *op. cit.*, p. 405.

<sup>91</sup> The best over-all history of this struggle is found in Davidson, *op. cit.*, *passim*. Unless otherwise specified, this section is based on Davidson.

<sup>92</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, p. 131.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 132-4.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 136-8.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 139-40.

<sup>96</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>98</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>99</sup> Cited in *Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>100</sup> An excellent, but very detailed, account of the legislative battle in North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama is found in Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. VI, pp. 129-204.

<sup>101</sup> Lescohier and Brandeis, *op. cit.*, p. 440.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 448.

<sup>103</sup> *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill, op. cit.*, pp. 235-9; Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. XIX, *Labor Laws and Factory Conditions*, pp. 655, 692, 788, 836.

<sup>104</sup> Rhyne, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 203-4.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 90-92.

## 9

*THE WORKING FAMILY  
AND ITS INCOME*

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THE COTTON textile industry has always been a field in which the family is considered the working unit. Wages have been predicated not on the American standard of a family supported by the labor of the father, but on the concept of a family supported by the combined earnings of the father and mother or children. This concept has conditioned the entire history of earnings and labor relations in the industry. The mill owner deals not only with labor in the narrow sense of those employed in the mill, but in the wider sense he deals with the entire family of the laborer and with the whole group of families which constitute the source of labor. Not only is it likely that more than one member of each family is employed in the mill, but what is equally important is that each nonworking member of each family, especially the children, are considered a potential source of labor. By tradition, by economic necessity, and even by employer compulsion, the child of the mill worker followed his elders into the mill. The extent of the compulsion has varied with the time and place and with general conditions in the industry in each of the main producing areas, but where outright compulsion has not been used, economic necessity has been equally effective.

It is only by reference to this background of the working family that the data on family income and standards of living become intelligible. In the North, toward the end of the first decade of the present century, the typical cotton mill family secured only 54 per cent of its income from the labor of the husband, while 29 per cent came from the children, 7 per cent from the wife, 8 per cent from boarders, and the rest from other sources.<sup>1</sup> The average household had 5.88 persons, and the native families were smaller than the foreign-born.<sup>2</sup> The average male family had earned \$470 per year, the native-born made \$585 and the foreign-born made \$461, while the total family income averaged \$791, or \$825 for the native family and \$788 for the foreign family.<sup>3</sup> Over one-quarter of the families made less than \$500 per year, approximately one-third made \$500 but less than \$750, and two-fifths

made over \$750 per year.<sup>4</sup> Other studies of New England and Southern mill families about the same time, though showing variations in total family income because of differences in the sample surveyed, emphasize the same point—the importance of the contribution of the women and children to the family income.<sup>5</sup> Low as the family income was, it still required the labor of more than one member of the family to garner even these meager fruits. The key to the employment of women and children was the low earnings of the father—earnings which could not by themselves support a tolerable existence. In turn, the low earnings of the father are traceable to the family labor system which has dominated the industry.

A detailed study of Fall River, Mass., and Southern mill families' income and expenditures for 1907-8 indicates to what extent the industry failed to provide its male wage earners with adequate means of family support. Typical families were chosen and the combined results studied "to determine what, according to the customs prevailing in the communities selected for study, is a fair standard of living and what, according to the same measure, is the minimum standard upon which families are living and apparently maintaining physical efficiency. These standards, it should be emphasized, are the standards found to be actually prevailing among cotton mill families of the several communities studied, and are not standards fixed by the judgment either of investigators or of the Bureau of Labor."<sup>6</sup> The "minimum standard" which was set up was

the smallest amount upon which families were living and apparently maintaining physical efficiency. This amount would be so low as to furnish a standard of living that would exclude everything except the bare necessities of life. The only expenses would be for food, clothing, fuel and light, sundries and rent. . . . If the family live upon this sum without suffering, wisdom to properly apportion the income is necessary. There can be no amusements or recreations that involve any expense. No tobacco can be used. No newspapers can be purchased. The children can not go to school, because there will be no money to buy their books. Household articles that are worn out or destroyed cannot be replaced. The above sum provided for neither birth nor death nor any illness that demands a doctor's attention or calls for medicine. Even though all these things are eliminated, if the family is not to suffer, the mother must be a woman of rare ability. She must know how to make her own and her children's clothing; she must physically be able to do all the household work, including the washing. And she must know enough to purchase with her allowance food that has the proper nutritive value.<sup>7</sup>



Besides this "minimum standard" another was drawn up which was called the "fair standard" which

provides not only for physical efficiency but allows for the development and satisfaction of human attributes. Just what is to be included in such a standard depends upon the people to whom it is applicable. . . . Nothing is included in the fair standard other than what some families have already attained, and all families are striving to attain. . . . This will enable [the father to give his family] good nourishing food and sufficient plain clothing. He can send his children to school. Unless a prolonged or serious illness befall the family, he can pay for medical attention. If a death should occur, insurance will meet the expense. He can provide some simple recreation for his family. . . . [But] this standard is by no means an ideal one. It does not allow savings to meet any unusual event, such as lack of employment or accident to the father. It makes no provision for old age. It provides for culture wants only in the most limited manner, viz., one paper costing one dollar a year. It provides elementary schooling for the children up to the twelfth year only. . . . To be unable to meet the demands of this standard of living is to place the family among those living in poverty.<sup>8</sup>

Considering the definition of these standards, which were derived from actual examination of the incomes and expenditures of cotton mill families, it is clear that the "minimum standard" is actually a poverty level which just obviates physical suffering and deterioration while the "fair standard" is but one step above the poverty level. Keeping these definitions in mind, the data collected in the survey may be examined. It should also be remembered that in the South it was impossible to study the lowest strata of the workers—the floating population which moved from mill to mill seeking better conditions but for whom neither wages nor expenditures could be obtained for more than a brief period.<sup>9</sup>

In Fall River, where 14 families were studied, the average family contained 6.8 persons (including boarders and lodgers) and there were 3.2 wage earners per family. Large families were the rule, the so-called "normal family" of a working husband supporting a wife and three children was nonexistent.<sup>10</sup> In only four of these families was the total annual income sufficient for more than a "fair standard" of living, in nine cases the income was sufficient for more than "minimum standard" but below the "fair standard," and in one case not even the "minimum standard" could be reached.<sup>11</sup> In terms of percentages, this means that over 70 per cent of the Fall River cotton mill families studied had less than a "fair standard" of living as measured by the

customs of the community. And what is perhaps more important, it required the labor of husband and wife or children to secure even these inadequate incomes, for no individual in any of the families had an income sufficient to support by himself a "normal family" at a "fair standard."<sup>12</sup> Indeed, in the matter of food alone, only half of the families showed food expenditures at a standard equal to or better than the Atlanta prison dietary, while the other half of the families fell below this standard.<sup>13</sup>

In the South, twenty-one cotton mill families of Atlanta, Ga., and Greensboro and Burlington, N.C., were studied at the same time as those of Fall River. Here, as in Fall River, the families were usually large. The average family had 8.5 persons with 3.6 wage earners to support this average family.<sup>14</sup> In less than half of the families supplying pertinent information did the food standard come up to that set by the Atlanta prison dietary.<sup>15</sup> Of the sixteen families whose income and expenditures were secured in detail, the total annual income in three families was at or below that required to maintain the "minimum standard" of living, eight families had incomes above that required for the "minimum" but were below the amount necessary for the "fair standard," while five families were above the "fair standard" of living.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to these sixteen families which were studied in detail, income data alone was secured for seventy-five other Southern cotton mill families of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. In these cases the family income was below the "minimum" requirements in 15 families, above the "minimum" but below the "fair" in 38 families, while 22 families had income above the requirements of the "fair standard."<sup>17</sup> Only two of the fathers (both were overseers) could by themselves have supported a "normal family" at the "fair standard" of living.<sup>18</sup>

For all the ninety-one Southern families studied, almost 20 per cent had incomes at or below the "minimum standard," just over 50 per cent were above the "minimum" but below the "fair standard," and almost 30 per cent had more than the "fair standard" required.<sup>19</sup>

From the above data it is clear that the cotton mill family needed more than one wage earner per family to make ends meet, and it was impossible for the father adequately to support a "normal family" of himself, wife, and three children out of his earnings alone. Corroborative evidence of this fact is supplied by a later study which was made on a slightly different basis. The NICB, in consultation with other agencies, estimated the minimum requirements of a "decent"

standard of living. A list of commodities was drawn up and this "Minimum American Standard" was priced in two cotton mill centers in Massachusetts, one mill center in North Carolina, and two in South Carolina. The total annual cost of living for a man, wife, and three children was computed<sup>20</sup> and it was the opinion of the investigators that "the maintenance of health and strength can scarcely be secured for less than the totals allowed."<sup>21</sup> The allowance varied somewhat in Massachusetts and the South to meet local conditions. In the South, for example, the housing priced was mill-owned except in Charlotte, N.C., where both mill-owned and other housing was priced. Similarly, wood and coal in the South were usually sold by the mill to the workers at lower than regular retail prices, and wherever possible these lower prices were used.<sup>22</sup> Here, as in the previous study, the mother is expected to economize by making the clothing for herself and the children (though there is no allowance for a sewing machine) and by doing the housework and the laundry.

Here again the cost of living at this Minimum American Standard for a "normal family" was beyond the earnings of a single wage earner. The annual cost of maintaining a family of husband, wife, and three children under 14 years of age in the two Massachusetts cities in 1919 was \$1,268 in Fall River and \$1,386 per year in Lawrence. In the same year the average annual wage per wage earner in the cotton manufacturing industry in this state was \$895.<sup>23</sup> The cost of living (using mill-owned housing) in the two South Carolina cities in 1920 was \$1,394 in Greenville and \$1,374 in Pelzer, while in 1919 the average annual wage per wage earner in the cotton manufacturing industry in South Carolina was \$757 and in 1921 it was \$645.<sup>24</sup> In Charlotte, N.C., the cost of living (using mill-owned housing) was \$1,438, and the average annual wage in this state was \$730 in 1919 and \$624 in 1921.<sup>25</sup> In every case the cost of living of the mill family was beyond the earnings of the average mill worker—even allowing for the fact that the annual average wage given above includes women and would thus be somewhat higher if the figures were available for men alone.

The mill family has no choice but to have more than one wage earner. In the mid-twenties, 500 North Carolina cotton mill families averaged 1.94 wage earners in an average family of 4.72 persons and this family's wage earners made enough to just about meet the NICB "Minimum American Standard" provided that they worked every week of the 45½ weeks in the year that the average North Carolina mill operated in 1925.<sup>26</sup> Sickness or unemployment would place the

family inevitably below the standard since the family just attained the Minimum American Standard under favorable employment conditions with the earnings of almost two wage earners per family. It is apparent that it was impossible for this family or for any "normal family" to approach the standard with the earnings of only the family head.

In 1935 the Division of Social Research of the Works Progress Administration made studies to determine the cost of living of an unskilled manual wage earner's family having two children.<sup>27</sup> In the course of this project, quantity and quality budgets at two living levels were constructed. The "emergency" level was one at which the family cannot live for any considerable period of time without hazard to health. The "maintenance" level was one step higher and

At the maintenance level, these four persons live in a four- or five-room house or apartment with water and sewer connections. Their dwelling is in at least a fair state of repair and contains an indoor bath and toilet for their exclusive use. They have gas, ice, electricity and a small radio, but no automobile. They read a daily newspaper, go to the movies once a week, and enjoy other simple leisure-time activities. Their food is an adequate diet at minimum cost. They pay for their own medical care. Clothing, furniture, furnishings, and household equipment are provided with some regard for social as well as material needs. Carfare, taxes, and numerous incidental expenses are included in their budget.<sup>28</sup>

Since 1935 the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics has priced this maintenance budget from time to time.<sup>29</sup> Based on weekly earnings for February, 1942, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the average cotton mill worker failed by \$6 to \$8 per week in the North and by \$10 to \$11 per week in the South to earn enough to meet the standards set up by the WPA maintenance budget.<sup>30</sup>

To provide anything like a decent livelihood the wife or the children must work also—and the previous chapter has indicated that they do their share. As we have noted earlier, the Northern mill family at about the end of the first decade of this century received less than 55 per cent of its income from the husband while the wife and children filled in the rest—with the lower-paid, newer immigrant naturally resorting to the aid of his family to a greater extent than the better-paid native and older immigrants. While the reliance on children has declined since 1900 due to legislation and social and economic factors, a greater proportion of the female cotton mill operatives were married when the 1930 census was taken than ever before.

In 1930, 41 per cent of the New England and 45 per cent of the Southern women operatives were married, compared to 30 and 28 per cent, respectively, in 1900. The combined New England and Southern percentages were 29 per cent in 1900 and 44 per cent in 1930.<sup>31</sup> The mill was no transient episode before marriage, but a necessity for everyday existence if the family was to avoid the lowest living levels to which it would be forced if dependence was upon the earnings of the husband alone. In the words of one Southern writer: "Wages in the whole industry are shockingly low everywhere, and apparently always have been. One is tempted to declare that the textile industry has always been parasitic, basing its scales upon a family wage, depending upon the labor of women and children and never paying its own way."<sup>32</sup>

In the family labor system, the mill village has played an important role. The close grouping of the workers and their families under the watchful eye and control of the mill owner, which is the essence of the mill village, has facilitated the perpetuation of the family as the working unit. Along with the economic necessity of family labor the mill village has provided an additional point of employer leverage to ensure the fullest possible utilization of the potential labor supply in the immediate area of the mill.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER

<sup>1</sup> Senate Document 633, *op. cit.*, Vol. 10, Part 3, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 99, 100.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>5</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 430-7.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. XVI, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 133, 142.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 142, 152-3.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 250.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 22-23.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 158-63.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 158-63, 171.

<sup>20</sup> Research Report #22, *op. cit.*, p. 17; Research Report #24, *op. cit.*, p. 13; Special Report #8, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>21</sup> Research Report #22, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-2; Research Report #24, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>22</sup> Special Report #8, *op. cit.*, pp. 1, 7, 13.

<sup>23</sup> 1920 *Census*, Vol. IX, p. 628.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1395; *1921 Census of Manufactures*, p. 200.

<sup>25</sup>*1920 Census*, Vol. IX, p. 1119; *1921 Census of Manufactures*, p. 200.

<sup>26</sup>Rhync, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-93, 96-98.

<sup>27</sup>Works Progress Administration, Division of Social Research, *Intercity Differences in Costs of Living in March 1935, 59 Cities*, Research Monograph XII, Washington, 1937, pp. IX-XIV.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. XIII.

<sup>29</sup>U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Changes in Cost of Living in Large Cities in the United States 1913-41*, Bulletin No. 699, Washington, 1941, pp. 10-13.

<sup>30</sup>National War Labor Board, press release, B 141, August 5, 1942, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup>*Appendix, Table VII.*

<sup>32</sup>*The Southern Textile Situation, op. cit.*, p. 123.

THE EARLY development of the cotton manufacturing industry in this country, in a period when long working hours were customary, left its mark in the persistence of this condition long past the time when other industries had taken steps toward a more reasonable work period than dawn-to-dusk. Until very recently, cotton manufacturing has lagged behind the other fields of manufacturing in this respect. At no time from 1900 to 1926 did the hours of work in cotton manufacturing fall to the level of the average hours in other manufacturing industries.<sup>1</sup> In 1909 only 1 per cent of the cotton mill workers were on a 54-hour week or less, while over 30 per cent of the employees in all manufacturing worked these hours. By 1919, partly as a result of union action and partly as a result of wartime conditions, 57 per cent of the cotton mill workers worked 54 hours a week or less, but by this time 74 per cent of the workers in all manufacturing fields were on this schedule.<sup>2</sup> Many years were to pass before cotton attained a parity with other manufacturing industries in the matter of hours of labor.

Indeed, the average hours alone do not really reveal the extremely long hours which many workers were forced to endure, especially in the increasingly important Southern section of the industry. Though average hours in 1900 were 62.3 per week, in North Carolina the range was from 63 to 75 with an average close to 69<sup>3</sup> and even the 66-hour week was considered close to an ideal condition in this state.<sup>4</sup> To a great extent, the long hours in the Southern mill were a carry-over from the farm background of the operatives in which it was customary to work in the fields during all the available daylight hours. To what extent the Southern mill workers objected to the long hours is difficult to determine, for in the absence of any substantial union movement the channels of opposition are few. Direct testimony on this score is contradictory.<sup>5</sup> Those who objected to the long hours left little record of their discontent and the spasmodic outbursts of unionism, as well as frequent moving, were results of a general dis-

satisfaction which was bound up with many other aspects of mill life. Some indication that the Southern employers recognized that the work week was unduly long is found in the ineffectual mutual agreements to limit hours to 66, which were made in North Carolina and Georgia in the early part of the century.<sup>6</sup> In 1919 the Textile Association of South Carolina agreed to adopt the 55-hour week.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, more than a decade later the Southern mills were still attempting to have this same limit adopted, only to find the agreement break down.<sup>8</sup>

The remedy for the persistently long work week in the industry lay in the adoption of effective restrictive legislation. In this field, as in child labor legislation, the New England states took the lead under the auspices of the unions. Indeed, the unions early recognized that because of the relatively low percentage of workers organized and the large number of women and children employed in the mills, the problem of hours could not be handled through trade-union action alone.<sup>9</sup> Though the unions called only for the restriction of the hours of women and minors, because of the importance of these groups (especially the women) in the labor force, the curtailment of women's hours actually governed the working hours of the men as well. The New England unions as early as 1898 attempted to meet the problem of the diversity of state laws by calling for federal legislation on hours.<sup>10</sup> They continued their efforts along these lines,<sup>11</sup> and in this they had the support of some of the mill interests in both Northern and Southern sections of the industry.<sup>12</sup>

At the opening of the present century in New England, hours laws in Maine, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Rhode Island limited the work of women to 10 hours daily and 60 hours weekly, while Massachusetts was one step ahead with a daily limit of 10 hours and a weekly limit of 58 hours.<sup>13</sup> In the Southern states which were important in cotton manufacturing in 1900, North Carolina and Alabama had no hour laws at all for women, the Alabama 8-hour law of 1886-7, having been repealed in 1894. Virginia limited women to 10 hours daily but no weekly limit was specified.<sup>14</sup> In South Carolina and Georgia men and women were covered by the same hours legislation and by 1900 both states had set limits of 11 hours daily and 66 hours weekly.<sup>15</sup>

Progress during the first ten years of the new century continued in New England, but little was done in the South. By 1910 Massachusetts had further reduced the limit for women's hours to 56 weekly while retaining the daily limit of 10 hours, and Rhode Island followed



suit. Maine, New Hampshire, and Connecticut remained slightly behind with weekly limits of 58 hours.<sup>16</sup> In the Southern area only South Carolina acted during this decade by cutting the hours for both men and women to 60 weekly and retaining the 11-hour daily limit after experimenting with a 10-hour limit.<sup>17</sup>

By 1920 the New England states had moved still further ahead of the South in hours legislation, for in this decade every New England state had acted at least once on this subject. At the end of the decade which included the years of the First World War, three states (Maine, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire) had a 54-hour weekly limit and daily maxima of 9, 10, and 10¼ hours, respectively. Connecticut had limits of 10 hours daily and 55 weekly, and Massachusetts had forged on to limits of 9 hours daily and 48 hours weekly.<sup>18</sup> Alabama still had no hours law; Virginia was content with the status of twenty years earlier (10 hours daily) and South Carolina retained its 1910 limits of 11 daily and 60 weekly. Georgia and North Carolina did show some progress, however, in laws covering both men and women—the former setting limits of 10 and 60 and the latter of 11 and 60.<sup>19</sup>

The twenties were a period of famine for hours legislation in both New England and the South. New England seemed to be surfeited with legislation and reluctant to do anything to widen the disparity between itself and the South, while in the latter area the emphasis was on the regulation of child labor rather than on hours as a whole. In Maine an attempt in 1923 to reduce hours to 8 and 48 was defeated by a referendum vote,<sup>20</sup> while in Massachusetts conflicting attempts to lengthen hours and to bring the limit below the 48 hours established in 1919 resulted in the retention of the status quo.<sup>21</sup> Altogether in New England no progress was made in shortening hours through legislation in the twenties, while in the South only South Carolina acted. In this state the limits were cut to 10 daily and 55 weekly for both men and women.<sup>22</sup>

The thirties saw a resumption of progressive state hours legislation in both sections of the industry. Before the passage of the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, three of the New England states had acted to meet the pace set by Massachusetts more than a decade earlier. Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Hampshire set weekly limits of 48 hours with a 9 hours daily maximum in the first two states and 10 hours in the third.<sup>23</sup> Thus by 1938 four New England states (Rhode Island, New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Massachusetts) had a 48-hour weekly limit and one (Maine) had set the maximum at 54 hours. The daily limit was 9 hours in three states (Rhode Island, Con-

necit, and Massachusetts) and 10 hours in two states (Maine and New Hampshire). Between 1938 and the end of 1940 there were no changes in the New England hours legislation picture.<sup>24</sup>

In the South, by 1938, some slight progress had been made over the 1920 and 1930 situations. In Virginia, in 1938, the hours for women were cut to 9 daily and 48 weekly.<sup>25</sup> In North Carolina, in 1931, the hours for women were reduced to 11 daily and 55 weekly but the hours protection for men was removed entirely until 1937 when the hours of women were limited to 9 daily and 48 weekly and those of men to 10 and 55.<sup>26</sup> In South Carolina a 1936 law was enacted<sup>27</sup> with 8- and 40-hour maxima, but was to remain inoperative until North Carolina and Georgia acted likewise—which meant that the law never went into effect. Another South Carolina law enacted in 1938<sup>28</sup> with the same hours provisions as the 1936 law was to become inoperative May 1, 1939, unless Congress limited hours to 40 a week before this time. This South Carolina law, which is more strict than the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act, is at present not enforced because of court injunctions.<sup>29</sup> By 1938, therefore, Alabama had the dubious distinction of being one of the few states in the nation without protective hours legislation for women, Virginia had limits of 9 and 48 for women, North Carolina had 9 and 48 for women and 10 and 55 for men, Georgia had 10 and 60 for both men and women, and South Carolina had 8 and 40 in a law whose operation was tied up by court action. Here, as in New England, there were no changes between 1938 and the end of 1940.<sup>30</sup>

The short but hectic NRA period saw all the cotton mill workers limited to 40 hours per week<sup>31</sup> for a period of approximately two years. In spite of the invalidation of the law in May, 1935, there was no large-scale return to the longer precode hours. In April, 1935, just one month before the abrogation of the code, less than 2 per cent of the employees were working hours which violated the code provisions. One year later, in April, 1936, 10 per cent of the employees were working more than the old code hours—and the New England states had a higher percentage of employees working over the old code limit than the Southern states. This adherence to the invalidated hour limits was a better record than that made by most of the other industries studied.<sup>32</sup> This record was undoubtedly due to the educational efforts of the mill owners' associations under the auspices of the Cotton-Textile Institute<sup>33</sup> but how long the observing mills would have been able to hold out against the violators is difficult to say. Previous experience with voluntary agreements in the industry had shown their

frailty. A 1936 report from North Carolina showed that the breakdown in standards was continuing beyond the point noted in the previously mentioned study.<sup>34</sup>

The passage of the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938<sup>35</sup> brought the hours of all cotton mill workers again under the control of the national government. Under the terms of the act the weekly maximum hours were to be 44 in the first year of the act's operation, 42 in the second year, and 40 in the third year and thereafter, with overtime work at rates at least one and one half times the regular wage rate. At this writing the 40-hour maximum is in effect with overtime permissible at the increased wage rate. As can readily be seen, this federal action controls only the basic work week and the rate of pay for overtime. There is no federal limit to the number of hours of overtime, so that the control of the absolute limits on the work week and the regulation of daily hours remain with the states under the state laws which have been given above. The only federal limit on daily hours occurs in the Walsh-Healey Public Contracts Act of 1936<sup>36</sup> which sets a maximum of 8 hours daily and 40 hours weekly with overtime permitted (at the discretion of the Secretary of Labor) at not less than one and one-half times the basic hourly pay. The Public Contracts Act, however, is limited in its scope to goods manufactured for the federal government in amounts exceeding \$10,000.

With federal legislation covering basic hours now in effect, the only function of the state hours laws is to restrict overtime to the legal maxima permitted by the state regardless of the rate of pay. As was the case with child labor laws, the states' records on the enforcement of their legislation has been spotty. Too often there were loopholes in the statute which made enforcement virtually impossible, oftener the funds and personnel for enforcement were so limited as to have the same result even with a law which was, on the face of it, enforceable. The New England experience showed that one of the first obstacles was that in the early laws the violation had to be "willful" on the part of the employer. By 1900, in New England, better wording was closing this loophole and throughout the present century the details which facilitated enforcement, such as schedule posting, were added in the more advanced states such as Massachusetts. Adverse court decisions also had to be combated, as for instance in Massachusetts where it was held that the 10-hour law applied to work in one factory only. Consequently, women would work 10 hours in one mill and then swap places with a friend in another mill for work-

ing a few more hours. This "swapping" was not stopped until law revisions in 1909.<sup>37</sup> Early in the present century the unions in New England noted the frequent law violations and pressed for strengthening clauses,<sup>38</sup> while a Fall River mill owner remarked that compliance varied directly with the extent of labor organization in the mills.<sup>39</sup> Only through long years of effort by the unions and other interested organizations did the laws of the New England states come to have more than a nominal effect upon working hours.

In the South there was little unionism and enforcement was correspondingly weak up to the time of federal intervention in the regulation of working hours. Not only were the laws full of loopholes (such as "making up lost time") and lacking in adequate schedule posting provisions, but the enforcement staffs were far below what was necessary to really police the industry.<sup>40</sup> In Georgia, for example, in 1900 there were no factory inspectors at all,<sup>41</sup> and in 1912 the authorities responsible for the enforcement of the law in this state noted that "Permitting lost time to be made up by textile mills practically nullifies the sixty hour law and makes enforcement of it extremely difficult."<sup>42</sup> In South Carolina the enforcement agency said, in 1911, that the hours law "is so constructed as to make it absolutely impossible to ascertain whether there has been a violation of the intent and purposes of the law or not."<sup>43</sup> Earlier and subsequent reports from this state up to 1916 dwell interminably on the loopholes in the law.<sup>44</sup> One student of Southern industry has said that before 1916 the restrictions were slight and enforcement inadequate, though some gradual improvements were being made.<sup>45</sup> The improvements indeed were extremely gradual. North Carolina started its hours legislation in 1915 but many years later the Commissioner of Labor for this state complains that the law gives no one authority for its enforcement or even to see that it is respected.<sup>46</sup> South Carolina embarked on the field of hours restriction back in 1892 but more than thirty-five years later there were still only two inspectors to cover the entire state and an investigating committee said in the late twenties that the labor laws were ignored by a commissioner who "excused" numerous cases of overtime.<sup>47</sup> Many South Carolina mills ran as much overtime as business required and the majority of foremen as well as workers were ignorant of any hours regulations and had never even seen a factory inspector.<sup>48</sup> Familiar devices used to evade the laws in the South included reporting for work before the official starting time and working in what was supposed to be the lunch hour.<sup>49</sup>

The diverse hour laws in New England and the South meant that

competing mills in both sections of the country were subject to unequal degrees of restriction of their working hours. In 1930, for example, reported average full-time weekly hours in the South ranged from 54.7 in Virginia to 56.5 in Georgia while in New England the range was from 48.5 in Massachusetts to 53.8 in Maine, with an average for all reporting states of 53.4 hours per week.<sup>50</sup> Only federal legislation could resolve these differences. Under the NRA the average hours dropped to 41.4 in 1933<sup>51</sup> and in July, 1941, the average was 39 hours.<sup>52</sup>

One field of hours regulation in which the federal government has so far played no role has been nightwork. Just when the use of nightwork began it is difficult to determine. Certainly it must have come before 1890, for in this year Massachusetts passed the first law in the cotton mill states to prohibit the employment of women at night. In 1907 the Massachusetts law was strengthened and in 1913 Connecticut passed a prohibitory law.<sup>53</sup> None of the other cotton mill states ever acted on the nightwork problem except in connection with child labor legislation. There is evidence that nightwork became increasingly popular with the mill owners of both sections in the nineties, and though the New England unions early expressed their opposition on the grounds that the flooding of the market would injure the workers, there was little they could do to stem the trend.<sup>54</sup> One of the factors in the development of night work about this time was that the introduction of the new automatic looms, with their greater speed and capacity, left the spinning department of the mill unable to keep up with the demands of the weavers, so that the spinners were started on a double-shift basis to restore the balance.<sup>55</sup>

Aside from this question of the automatic looms, which was soon adjusted by the addition of more spindleage, there is nothing in the technology of cotton manufacturing which requires unceasing operation—for this is no continuous process industry whose product necessitates an unbroken line of fabrication. The night shift came into vogue from two channels—when business was good each mill hastened to get as much of the market as possible while the getting was good, and when business was bad the spreading of the overhead costs over a greater volume of production meant that in the depressed market of slim margins the double-shift mill had a slight edge over the single-shift mill. The productivity of labor on the night shift was lower than it was during the day and some mills found this handicap great enough to cause them to revert to the single shift<sup>56</sup> early in the present century. On the whole, the extent of nightwork before the First

World War varied with business conditions, but annual reports covering North Carolina mills up to 1914 showed a steady increase in the proportion of mills operating night shifts.<sup>57</sup> It was estimated that before the First World War 85 per cent of the industry was on a single shift,<sup>58</sup> and the North Carolina data compared with material for Massachusetts indicates that nightwork was more prevalent in the South than in New England.<sup>59</sup>

It was the boom period of the First World War that really started the industry on a double-shift nightwork basis. Though all the New England states could not keep up with the race because two of them had legislation prohibiting the labor of women (an indispensable part of the force) at night, Maine, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and the Southern states were in position for working all hours of the day and night, and special permits for nightwork were issued in Massachusetts for a time during the war.<sup>60</sup> The Southern companies built up their mills and their mill villages to a double-shift capacity with wartime profits and after the war they continued the practice both because they were adjusted to this level of operations and because the unit cost of production was lowered by the addition of the second shift. Even though the workers were averse to working at night and it was long the custom to pay higher wage rates for nightwork,<sup>61</sup> analyses of mill cost in the mid-twenties showed that, even with a higher wage rate and a lower productivity at night, mill costs were lowered by two-shift operation.<sup>62</sup> It is no wonder that in 1925-6, more than half of the North Carolina mills were operating a night shift.<sup>63</sup> The effect on the industry as a whole was another matter, for as one Southern mill executive testified, the overproduction caused by nightwork was running the mills into the "red" but the individual mill could not stop nightwork unless his competitors did the same<sup>64</sup> and the states did not wish to pass nightwork laws unless the other cotton manufacturing states all did likewise—which adds up to the well-known vicious circle.

Though nightwork was early recognized as particularly vicious and grueling by the unions and social workers,<sup>65</sup> legislation was secured in only two of the five New England cotton mill states and no progress at all along these lines was made in the South. The attempt of the United Textile Workers to inject the federal government into the scene, by attaching a rider to a tariff bill, failed.<sup>66</sup> The suggestion of one progressive mill owner in 1929 that President Hoover call a conference of the industry to eliminate nightwork for women likewise had no effect,<sup>67</sup> and an attempt of the New England mills to get the

Cotton-Textile Institute to oppose nightwork for women led to a rift in the Institute.<sup>68</sup> A survey of mills in both sections showed that over half were operating on two shifts in 1930, with this practice most prevalent in the South.<sup>69</sup>

The depression which began in 1929, however, encouraged attempts within the industry to regulate nightwork. In January, 1930, the Cotton-Textile Institute sponsored an agreement of the mill owners to limit the night shift to 50 hours per week and in October of the same year the Institute recommended that the employment of women and children on the night shift be discontinued entirely after March 1, 1931. In June, 1932, the Institute went one step further by advocating the complete abolition of nightwork for one year. None of these measures proved effective in the face of a determined opposition by a minority of the industry and the increase of business in the summer of 1932 left the plan for the complete abolition of nightwork without even the semblance of a trial.<sup>70</sup> It was estimated that, just prior to the NIRA only about 30 per cent of the active spindles in the country were on a single shift, two-thirds were on a double shift, and 3 per cent were operating on three shifts.<sup>71</sup>

The codification of the industry under the NIRA put the entire problem of the double shift and nightwork in a new light. Under the terms of the code, the industry was limited to two shifts of 40 hours each.<sup>72</sup> This 80-hour limitation on machine hours was opposed by certain mills which before the code had been operating on a three-shift basis. Only the makers of tire yarns and fabrics succeeded in securing an exemption from the shift limits until the end of 1933,<sup>73</sup> while other applicants for exemption were refused.<sup>74</sup> The proposal of one mill to be permitted to operate four 6-hour shifts at the same wage paid for 8 hours also was denied.<sup>75</sup> As was to be expected, those mills which were previously operating a single shift of more than 40 hours moved to maintain their production by adding a second shift. Massachusetts in 1933 hastened to amend its nightwork law by authorizing the Commissioner of Labor to suspend the 6 P.M. limit for women so as to enable the mills to operate a second shift,<sup>76</sup> and this authorization has been continually renewed.<sup>77</sup> By 1934, 90 per cent of the industry was operating on two shifts. The South still led in double-shift operation but there was less difference than formerly between New England and the South on this score.<sup>78</sup> Since the NIRA placed practically the entire industry on a two-shift basis, the question of nightwork has changed its character. The second shift now usually starts work late in the afternoon and continues until

about one hour after midnight whereas the old second shift used to work all through the night. At present the industry applies the term "nightwork" or "graveyard shift" not to the second shift but to the third shift, which operates from about midnight to morning. A survey of 251 cotton mills in September, 1940, showed that 3 mills operated on a four-shift basis, 130 operated three shifts, 99 operated two shifts, and 19 operated only one shift.<sup>79</sup> The widespread adoption of three-shift operation will mean a tremendous problem of readjustment after the war, unless some way is found to maintain the peacetime purchasing power of the people at a level equal to the wartime demand. Federal legislation under the NIRA, the Fair Labor Standards Act, and the Public Contracts Act facilitated the transition of the industry from a one-shift to a two-shift basis, but the national government has as yet said nothing about the time of day or night that women and children may work.

Looking back at the history of the hours of labor in the industry it is apparent that until the NRA period, the cotton mill lagged behind the average manufacturing industry in reducing the length of the work week. Since the NRA hours have been shortened until they are the same as those in other industries. Nightwork was unimportant until the First World War brought with it a scramble for production, and after the war many mills remained on a two-shift basis in order to utilize fully their mill villages and machinery and thus secure the advantage of lower overhead costs per unit of output; this was especially true in the South where there were no legal obstacles to night operation. When the NRA reduced the hours of labor to 40 per week, practically the entire industry went on a two-shift basis and this has remained the standard. At the present time three-shift operation is common and very few mills operate only one shift. The competition of better-paying armament and shipbuilding plants, however, has caused difficulty in maintaining the three shifts in the face of the competition for labor in some areas.<sup>80</sup>

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER

<sup>1</sup> *Appendix, Table X.*

<sup>2</sup> *Monthly Labor Review, op. cit.*, December, 1923, pp. 82-83.

<sup>3</sup> *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill, op. cit.*, p. 133.

<sup>4</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 496.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 518; Massachusetts, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor*, 1905, pp. 64-78; North Carolina, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor and Printing*, 1900, p. 78.

<sup>6</sup> *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill, op. cit.*, p. 134; Industrial Relations Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. XI, p. 10501.



- <sup>7</sup> South Carolina, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, Commerce, and Industry*, 1919, p. 23.
- <sup>8</sup> Burgy, *op. cit.*, p. 147; George B. Galloway and Associates, *Industrial Planning Under Codes*, Harper & Brothers, New York and London, 1935, p. 117; *Hearings on S. Res. 79, op. cit.*, Part 5, p. 1638.
- <sup>9</sup> Thomas F. McMahon, *United Textile Workers of America*, The Workers Education Bureau Press, New York, 1926, p. 26.
- <sup>10</sup> Massachusetts, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor*, 1898, pp. 499, 501.
- <sup>11</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. XIV, pp. 569-70, 578, 580, 585, 589.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, pp. 522, 784, Vol. XIV, pp. 545, 562, 591.
- <sup>13</sup> Women's Bureau, Bulletin No. 66-II, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-26, 49-50, 53-58, 77-79, 134.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 144-5.
- <sup>15</sup> South Carolina, *Acts, op. cit.*, 1892, No. 39; Georgia, *Acts, op. cit.*, 1889, No. 599.
- <sup>16</sup> Women's Bureau, Bulletin No. 66-II, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-26, 49-50, 53-58, 77-79, 134.
- <sup>17</sup> South Carolina, *Acts, op. cit.*, 1907, No. 233, 1909, No. 121.
- <sup>18</sup> Women's Bureau, Bulletin No. 66-II, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-26, 49-50, 53-58, 77-79, 134.
- <sup>19</sup> Georgia, *Acts, op. cit.*, 1911, No. 279; North Carolina, *Public Laws, op. cit.*, ch. 148.
- <sup>20</sup> Women's Bureau, Bulletin No. 66-II, *op. cit.*, p. 50.
- <sup>21</sup> *Monthly Labor Review, op. cit.*, August, 1924, p. 17; Massachusetts, General Court of 1924, Committee on Labor and Industry, *Hearings on Senate 93 and 94 and Senate 95, passim*; Massachusetts Legislature, Committee on Labor and Industry, *Report of Hearings on Senate Bill 149 and Senate Bill 191, passim*, published by the Associated Industries of Massachusetts, Boston, 1928.
- <sup>22</sup> South Carolina, *Acts, op. cit.*, 1922, No. 567.
- <sup>23</sup> Rhode Island, *Public Laws, op. cit.*, 1936, ch. 2426; Connecticut, *Cumulative Supplement, op. cit.*, 1935, ch. 279, sec. 1598c; New Hampshire, *Laws*, 1937, ch. 36.
- <sup>24</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 694, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 988-9.
- <sup>25</sup> Virginia, *Acts, op. cit.*, 1938, ch. 409.
- <sup>26</sup> North Carolina, *Public Laws, op. cit.*, 1931, ch. 289, 1937, ch. 409.
- <sup>27</sup> South Carolina, *Acts, op. cit.*, 1936, No. 832.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 1938, No. 702.
- <sup>29</sup> Letter to this author from the South Carolina Department of Labor, February 21, 1941.
- <sup>30</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 694, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 988-9.
- <sup>31</sup> *Codes of Fair Competition, op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 15-18.
- <sup>32</sup> *Monthly Labor Review, op. cit.*, January, 1937, p. 13 ff.
- <sup>33</sup> Cotton-Textile Institute, press release, June 11, 1935.
- <sup>34</sup> North Carolina, *Biennial Report of the Department of Labor*, 1934-1936, p. 49.
- <sup>35</sup> Public No. 718—75th Congress.
- <sup>36</sup> Public No. 846—74th Congress.
- <sup>37</sup> Women's Bureau, Bulletin No. 66-II, *op. cit.*, pp. 53-58; *Massachusetts Labor Bulletin, op. cit.*, October, 1907, p. 142.
- <sup>38</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. XIV, pp. 580, 585.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 562.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. VII, p. 228.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 228.
- <sup>42</sup> Georgia, *Annual Report of the Department of Commerce and Labor*, 1912, p. 8.
- <sup>43</sup> South Carolina, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture, Commerce, and Industry*, 1911, p. 4.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 1910, p. 21, 1912, p. 6, 1913, pp. 3-6, 1914, p. 6, 1915, p. 6.
- <sup>45</sup> *The New South, op. cit.*, p. 118.
- <sup>46</sup> North Carolina, *Report of the Bureau of Labor*, 1928-1930, *passim*, *Biennial Report of the Department of Labor*, 1930-1932, *passim*.
- <sup>47</sup> *Hearings on S. Res. 49, op. cit.*, pp. 7-14.

- <sup>48</sup> Page, *op. cit.*, p. 60; Tippet, *op. cit.*, p. 23.
- <sup>49</sup> Dunn and Hardy, *op. cit.*, pp. 115-7.
- <sup>50</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Wages and Hours of Labor in Cotton-Goods Manufacturing 1910-1930*, Bulletin No. 539, Washington, 1931, p. 9.
- <sup>51</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Wages in Cotton-Goods Manufacturing*, Bulletin No. 663, Washington, 1938, p. 68.
- <sup>52</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Information Bulletin*, September, 1941, p. 15.
- <sup>53</sup> Women's Bureau, Bulletin No. 66-II, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-26, 53-58.
- <sup>54</sup> *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill*, *op. cit.*, p. 70; Massachusetts, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor*, 1898, p. 501; Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. XIV, p. 570; Women's Bureau, Bulletin No. 66-I, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-54.
- <sup>55</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 186.
- <sup>56</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 521, 571.
- <sup>57</sup> North Carolina, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor and Printing*, reports for 1906-1914, *passim*.
- <sup>58</sup> *Hearings on S. Res. 79, op. cit.*, Part 5, p. 1631.
- <sup>59</sup> *Massachusetts Labor Bulletin, op. cit.*, September, 1904, p. 243; Women's Bureau, Bulletin No. 66-I, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-53.
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- <sup>61</sup> *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill, op. cit.*, p. 135.
- <sup>62</sup> Fraser and Doriot, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-9; Charles J. Rudolph Grossman, *The Possibilities of Cotton Manufacturing in Texas*, University of Texas Bulletin, No. 2832: August 22, 1928, Bureau of Business Research, Business Research Monograph No. 1, University of Texas, Austin, p. 16.
- <sup>63</sup> North Carolina, *Report of the Bureau of Labor*, 1925-1926, p. 1 ff.
- <sup>64</sup> *Hearings on S. Res. 49, op. cit.*, pp. 132-3.
- <sup>65</sup> Blanshard, *op. cit.*, p. 9; Florence Kelley, "Wage-Earning Women in War Time—The Textile Industry," *Journal of Industrial Hygiene*, October, 1919, reprinted by the National Consumers' League, New York, *passim*.
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- <sup>68</sup> *The Industrial Revolution in the South, op. cit.*, p. 154.
- <sup>69</sup> *Monthly Labor Review, op. cit.*, June, 1936, p. 1486-8.
- <sup>70</sup> Whitney, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-72; Galloway and Associates, *op. cit.*, p. 117; *Hearings on S. Res. 79, op. cit.*, Part 5, p. 1638.
- <sup>71</sup> Charles Frederick Roos, *N R A Economic Planning*, Cowles Commission for Research in Economics, Monograph 2, Principia Press Inc., Bloomington, Ind., 1937, p. 365, note 2; U.S. Senate, Committee on Education and Labor, *Hearings on S. 2926*, 73rd Congress, 2nd Session, Washington, 1934, Part 1, p. 330.
- <sup>72</sup> *Codes of Fair Competition, op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 15-18.
- <sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 702, Vol. III, pp. 655, 658, 661, Vol. IV, p. 691.
- <sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 727-8.
- <sup>75</sup> National Recovery Administration, press release, 3462, February 24, 1934, 4972, May 10, 1934.
- <sup>76</sup> Massachusetts, *Annual Report of the Department of Labor and Industries*, 1933, p. 7.
- <sup>77</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Women's Bureau, *State Labor Laws for Women*, Bulletin No. 156-II, Washington, 1941, pp. iv, 41.
- <sup>78</sup> *Monthly Labor Review, op. cit.*, June, 1936, pp. 1486-8.
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# 11

## UNEMPLOYMENT AND THE WORK LOAD

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IN CONSIDERING the question of unemployment among cotton mill workers, we must remember that the evidence is relatively scarce. Cotton manufacturing is an industry which is subject to seasonal fluctuations and, due to the increased importance of style, seasonal variations in employment increased after the end of the First World War. The greatest increase in the seasonality of employment took place between 1919 and 1925; after 1925 the fluctuations abated somewhat, but still remained much above the 1919 pattern.<sup>1</sup>

More direct evidence on unemployment is contained in various surveys which have been made from time to time. A study of Fall River operatives in 1899 showed that during this year the average operative worked 9.4 months in the mills and managed to bring his total time worked for the year up to 9.5 months by finding work in other fields. This left the average worker with two and one-half months of total unemployment in this year.<sup>2</sup> During the course of the 1900 Census data on unemployment were collected which showed that 14 per cent of the cotton mill operatives were unemployed at some time during this year. The percentage of unemployment in the Southern mills was somewhat greater than in New England, but the unemployment of the Southern workers was of shorter duration than that of the New England operatives. Of those who were unemployed in New England, 56 per cent were out of work for three months or less, while in the South two-thirds of the unemployment lasted three months or less. At the other extreme, 21 per cent of the unemployed workers of New England were out of work for seven months or more, while but 10 per cent of the Southern unemployed were in this group.<sup>3</sup>

For the record between the dates of the 1900 Census and the 1930 Census there is not much material. Data on the percentage of trade-union members unemployed in Massachusetts are available for several years, but the fact that cotton manufacturing was not well-organized, among other things, means that these data are of little help. A study of employment (without regard to union membership) in New Eng-

land mills for the year ending in the spring of 1909 disclosed that 33 per cent of the females and 43 per cent of the males had worked the full twelve months, 42 per cent and 36 per cent, respectively, had worked at least nine months but less than twelve, and 25 per cent of the females and 21 per cent of the males had worked less than nine months in the year.<sup>4</sup> A rather complete count of the unemployed was made in the 1930 Census. This count was defective in one important respect, as we shall note later, but it did show that close to 11 per cent of the cotton mill workers were totally unemployed. The New England states had an unemployment rate much higher than that of the South. Of the total number unemployed, 32 per cent had been unemployed less than one week, 44 per cent were unemployed for 1 to 13 weeks, and 24 per cent had been out of work for 14 weeks or more.<sup>5</sup>

After the 1930 Census, there was another period during which only fragmentary data on unemployment were available until the 1937 Census of Unemployment. A state census taken in Massachusetts in 1934 showed some 40 per cent of the cotton mill workers totally unemployed or on temporary jobs in private industry or with the government.<sup>6</sup> Many of these workers had been unemployed for long periods—over one-quarter of them had not worked for four years or more.<sup>7</sup> A state census taken in Rhode Island in 1936 revealed that 26 per cent of the males and 21 per cent of the females in the industry were unemployed.<sup>8</sup> The 1937 Census of Unemployment, which was conducted by the voluntary registration method, reported 48,960 cotton mill workers totally unemployed or on emergency work such as the WPA. As in 1930, the rate of unemployment was greater in New England than in the South.<sup>9</sup> Since this census was made by the voluntary registration method, an enumerative check was made to determine the completeness of the registration. This check showed that the registration was 71 per cent complete for those totally unemployed or on emergency work.<sup>10</sup> This indicates that the above figures on total unemployment of cotton mill workers in 1937 are an understatement in that they represent only 71 per cent of the true number totally unemployed. Thus, the true number of totally unemployed would be close to 69,000, or some 16 per cent of the wage earners.<sup>11</sup> The preliminary data from the 1940 Census shows a sharp drop in unemployment from that disclosed by the 1937 Census of Unemployment.<sup>12</sup> With over 60 per cent of the industry's output going to the government for war purposes, complaints of a labor shortage appeared in the fall of 1942.<sup>13</sup>

Glancing back over all the data on unemployment which has been assembled above, there is one important criticism which must be applied to all. These figures represent unemployment in the sense of a worker totally without work, but the characteristic of the employment policy of the industry is that partial unemployment or part-time work is very common. Therefore, a picture of unemployment in the industry requires not only data on total unemployment, but an examination of the extent of part-time employment as well. Data on part-time work is even more scarce than data on total unemployment. Kuznets' study of seasonality showed that the variations in payrolls were conspicuously larger than the variations in employment, because of the use of part-time employment.<sup>14</sup> Part-time employment has been especially important in the South. In this region the newness of industrial life and the unfamiliarity of the workers, fresh from the farm, with the regularity of factory employment early led to the use of the "spare hand" system to man the vacant posts when one of the workers chose to take a day off. The Southern mill owners complained that the employees did not work regularly, so that spare hands had to be brought into the mill village; and once the spare hands were present, they had to be given work even if the regular employees had to be "sent out to rest" from time to time. Thus a circle was set up—the people worked irregularly because there were too many hands, and there were too many hands because the people worked irregularly.<sup>15</sup> Though the factory system in the South gradually lost its strangeness for the operatives, the spare hand system and absenteeism persisted. The extent of this part-time employment due to the spare hand system is not exactly known, but it has been the subject of some comment and is responsible for the fact that the margin between actual hours and scheduled hours has been much greater in the South than in New England.<sup>16</sup> In 1932 one representative of the Southern industry estimated that, in a group of South Carolina mills with 16,000 on the payrolls, not more than 12,600 were needed to man these mills fully, while 3,400 were spare hands who worked only part-time.<sup>17</sup>

After the First World War when the New England section of the industry started its decline, part-time employment made its appearance here in large volume. In 1926, for example, in Massachusetts the proportion of employees who were working part-time was not less than one-third of the total employees in any month and was over 50 per cent in four of the months. In 1928, and 1929 similarly, substantial sections of the Massachusetts cotton mill workers were employed only

part-time, and from 1930 to 1933, inclusive, there were only nine months in the entire period in which the proportion of workers on part-time dropped below 25 per cent.<sup>18</sup> Though the 1930 Census showed only 11 per cent of the cotton mill workers to be totally unemployed, the total spindle-hours operated by the industry in 1930 were 23 per cent below the operating hours of 1929,<sup>19</sup> which indicates that there must have been considerable part-time employment among those still on the payroll. Further indication of the importance of part-time employment came in the 1934 Massachusetts Census. In this census some 40 per cent of the cotton mill workers were wholly unemployed, but another 33 per cent were only in part-time employment.<sup>20</sup> Finally, the Federal Unemployment Census of 1937 reported almost 49,000 cotton mill workers to be totally unemployed and when this figure was expanded to take account of omissions in the registration we saw that close to 69,000, or 16 per cent of the workers, were totally unemployed. This same census reported 44,005 workers on part-time, and part-time employment was more important in the South than in New England. In the South, in fact, more workers were on part-time than were totally unemployed, whereas in New England the reverse was true.<sup>21</sup> With the registration of part-time workers estimated to be 58 per cent complete,<sup>22</sup> the actual number of workers in part-time employment would be almost 76,000, or 18 per cent of the workers.<sup>23</sup> Thus, it is evident that unemployment figures alone are not a sufficient measure of the workers' loss of income due to lack of employment, for partial unemployment or part-time employment is equally important, if not more so.

A final word on the subject of unemployment may be said in connection with the question of labor turnover. Every time an employee quits, is discharged, or laid off, there is a loss of income until another job is secured. Statistics on labor turnover are relatively new. Though toward the end of the first decade of this country a survey of 91 Southern mills showed an annual turnover of 76 per cent,<sup>24</sup> no other statistical material appeared until after the First World War and a continuous series on turnover commenced only recently. Some observers have noted the larger turnover in the South as compared to New England mills and have used this as an indication of unrest among the Southern workers, for the available data do indicate a higher rate of quits in the South.<sup>25</sup> For the cotton manufacturing industry as a whole, the rate of quits, discharges, and total separations is higher than that for all manufacturing industries for which the Bureau of Labor Statistics collected data in 1932-1940.<sup>26</sup> Whether this

is due to some specific factor or to the general poor labor management of the industry cannot be readily determined, but it is true that few mills in either section of the country have given much thought to their labor relations and there is little of centralized employment offices or any form of scientific personnel administration.<sup>27</sup> In any event, the worker bears the burden in the form of lost time and reduced income.

While the cotton mill worker has been confronted by long hours, low wages, unemployment and part-time employment, his troubles have not ended here. The increase in the work assignment which has accompanied the development of the industry has given the workers another problem. Cotton manufacturing is unique among the country's major industries in that its production techniques were well-stabilized before the beginning of the present century. The changes which have come have been mainly in the nature of improvements in the basic machinery and in the combination of processes rather than revolutionary innovations. The development of ring spinning and its perfection for high-speed production in the 1870's, the invention and adoption of the automatic loom which began in the middle nineties, and the introduction of the tying-in machine shortly after the beginning of the present century<sup>28</sup> set the pattern of change which dominated the industry until after the end of the First World War. From about 1900 to the middle twenties, therefore, the changes in manufacture were those based on the adoption of better machinery.

Although some beginnings were made in the application of the principles of scientific management and job analyses in cotton manufacturing before the First World War by one of the pioneers in this field,<sup>29</sup> it was the war and its need for increased production which really stimulated thinking along these lines. It took the depression of the postwar years to get the scientific management movement in the industry under way. Coincident with this development, the machinery manufacturers were faced with a slowing down in mill growth and turned their attention to improving their product and thus increasing the rate of obsolescence. The development of the single-process picker in the preparatory stages of manufacture combined several operations into one, reduced handling and personnel requirements, and at the same time improved the uniformity of the product. The introduction of long-draft spinning also reduced the number of operations while producing a better yarn. High-speed spoolers and warpers made possible large savings in space and labor in the spooling and warping operations. One Southern mill, for example, in this

way made an annual saving of over \$12,000 on an investment of \$11,000. In weaving the main advance has been in the matter of speed. In 1929 the Draper Corporation introduced a loom which operated 25 per cent faster than its predecessor. Corollary improvements have also been made in power transmission and in humidity and temperature controls, which enable a manufacturer to get the most out of the new machinery.<sup>30</sup>

The net result of these changes has been a great reduction in the labor requirements per unit of output. A comparison of the possible output of an up-to-date mill in 1910 with an up-to-date mill in 1936, for example, showed that in eight cloth constructions the man-hour output increased from 50 to 152 per cent between these years.<sup>31</sup> A Bureau of Labor Statistics study shows that between 1919 and 1929 output per man-hour in the industry as a whole rose 18 per cent, while between 1929 and 1941 output per man-hour increased by 62 per cent.<sup>32</sup>

The introduction of new and speedier machinery has never received the immediate approval of the workers, as they expressed their opinions in the form of strikes and through their union leaders. With faster machinery and automatic controls, the mill owners increased the number of machines to be tended by each worker. This process gradually came to be known as the "stretch-out." As the worker put it, the employer wanted to "stretch out" the worker over more machines. To the employer, the whole question came under the heading of the "work assignment," and with the improvement in machinery and methods it seemed but natural that the work assignment would be increased. The reaction of the workers took two forms. First, opposition to the increase as a matter of principle and, second, opposition to the increase as being "unreasonable" and not accompanied by increases in pay commensurate with the increased effort required. The introduction of automatic looms, which began in the mid-nineties, for example, called forth both these reactions.<sup>33</sup> The Fall River strike of 1904 had its roots in the increase in the loom load which followed the installation of automatic looms and electric stops. The weavers conceded that they earned more under the new system of more looms and a lower piece rate, but contended that the increased exertion required was out of proportion to the increased earnings.<sup>34</sup> Several other strikes of this nature resulted in compromises which adjusted the load to a point which the weavers considered more reasonable. The mills, however, expected such disputes due to the change in assign-



ments,<sup>35</sup> and the main effect of the disputes was to restrain the employers from making the changes too rapidly.

The attempt to introduce scientific management, job analyses, and bonus wage systems into the mills just before the First World War caused similar reactions. In the early period of scientific management, it not infrequently happened that the installation overlooked some important factors. Henry Gantt, a pioneer in this field, noted that at one such mill the weavers were unable to meet the task set for them because they were not supplied with standardized materials.<sup>36</sup> In other cases, overenthusiastic engineers speeded up machines beyond their capacity and even beyond the maximum speed guaranteed by the maker of the machinery. The consequent increase in thread breakage made the work so exhausting that in spite of the increased earnings the operatives struck and succeeded in having the speed of the machinery reduced.<sup>37</sup> In still another mill, a bonus system of wage payment was introduced by which a weaver, who reached a certain production per day, received \$2.41, but if he fell slightly below this standard he received only a flat daily rate of \$1.47. The weaver was formerly paid for all he produced, but now he considered that the mill got a good deal of his work free if he fell slightly below the task. With this payment system, the difficulty of making the task, and the increased nervous strain of the work on the new and faster looms, it is no wonder that the worker felt aggrieved.<sup>38</sup> The United Textile Workers before the First World War, and before the scientific management movement really branched out into cotton manufacturing, took the stand that the prerequisite to the peaceable and satisfactory introduction of scientific management was consultation with organized labor in the industry, to the end that the changes be made with due consideration for the capacity and welfare of the workers.<sup>39</sup> This stand was refined after the war to include full consultation with the union on the changes in machinery and methods, and equitable sharing of the savings between worker and employer.<sup>40</sup> This is, essentially, the position taken by the unions in the industry today.

To put this policy into effect has been no small problem for the unions, for frequently the increase in the work assignment, even when accompanied by equitable wage increases, meant the displacement of many workers and the demotion of others as the jobs were made more specialized and some of the former skilled workers were left with only unskilled auxiliary positions. The U.T.W. undertook an ambitious experiment of co-operation with the mill management on work assignments at one large Massachusetts plant in 1926. While business

was good, the plan worked fairly well, but when the stormy weather of depression came and the increased assignments were accompanied by wage cuts and short working time, which further decreased earnings, the whole plan blew up in 1933 in a welter of conflict which led to a strike. The workers, during the later years of the plan, had come to distrust the union officials who, it seemed to the workers, were continually in the position of acting as agents of the mill in inducing the operatives to accept the assignment increases and wage cuts. In truth, the union officials never had any real grasp of the larger implications of the co-operation plan. The workers had expected the union-management co-operation plan to make their jobs and earnings more secure, but under the plan they seemed always on the verge of changes which resulted in the elimination of jobs and greater work loads and their sense of insecurity grew instead of diminishing. The strike which ended the plan also ended the influence of the U.T.W. at this plant, where the labor relations had been on a contractual basis with the U.T.W. for some seven years preceding 1933, and the U.T.W. itself had been preceded in this relation by the independent American Federation of Textile Operatives, for an equal period. The workers repudiated the U.T.W., formed an independent union, and one of the conditions of the strike settlement was the abandonment of work assignment changes for two years.<sup>41</sup> Subsequently, these workers shifted their union allegiance again, this time to the Textile Workers Union of America, C.I.O.

For increased work assignments to result in strikes was, of course, nothing new. The 1929-30 outbursts in the South were based on the objections of the workers to increases in the work load which they considered excessive. Many of these were short strikes under purely local nonunion leadership and succeeded in securing adjustment of the load.<sup>42</sup> In these strikes, public sentiment was invariably on the side of the strikers. Even the trade journal of the Southern mill owners chided the employers for overstepping the bounds of reason in the matter of work assignments, while a South Carolina legislative committee laid the blame for the strikes directly at the door of the mill owners.<sup>43</sup> As a matter of fact, practically every strike in the South, in this period, whether organized or unorganized, demanded an end to the stretch-out.<sup>44</sup> In many cases the manner in which the work assignment was increased was as much an issue as the extent of the increase itself. Abrupt changes, tactlessly introduced without warning, increased assignments not warranted by the inadequate preparation of the material and inadequate job analyses, no consultation with the

employees to explain the changes, and no experimentation to try out the new assignments, all alienated the workers, who had little recourse except to strike.<sup>45</sup>

In 1932 and 1933 bills were introduced in the South Carolina legislature to limit the number of looms which could be assigned to a weaver, but both bills failed of passage.<sup>46</sup> It remained for the NIRA period to see a government attempt to wrestle with the stretch-out problem. During the course of the hearings on the Cotton Textile Code, the question of increased work loads was raised and a committee was appointed to make recommendations for handling the problem. Before this committee reported, however, the President approved the code and included in his order of approval a stipulation that work loads were not to be further increased without the sanction of the code authority and the NRA.<sup>47</sup> A short time later, on July 21, 1933, the committee reported that in many cases hasty load increases burdened the employees, and that it was not feasible to control the load through the code, but recommended the setting up of a special board for this purpose.<sup>48</sup> On August 8, 1933, the Cotton Textile National Industrial Relations Board was appointed to solve the problems of the stretch-out and other working conditions, by setting up mill committees of workers and employers in the first instance, and providing for a procedure which brought the conflict before the state board and then the national board if no settlement was effected along the way.<sup>49</sup> Needless to say, this cumbersome and drawn-out procedure did not please the unions at all, and there were continual complaints that the mills were speeding up their machinery and increasing the work assignments so as to get the highest possible production under the hour restrictions of the code.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, the "mill committee" was to be composed of employees and employers—which left no room for a union representative even if the workers wanted an outsider to represent them. In July, 1934, the provision for the mill committees was changed by the NRA to allow the employees to be represented by someone outside their own ranks, but the employers apparently never accepted this change as legal since it was made without the consent of the Code Authority.<sup>51</sup> Regardless of the legality of the change, this in itself had no effect on the reaction of the unions and the workers to the Cotton Textile National Industrial Relations Board and increased work loads played an important part in the conditions which led to the general strike of 1934.<sup>52</sup> The very limited legal powers of the board, its lack of facilities to perform its functions, the lack of textile labor representation on the board, led the committee appointed

by the President to mediate the 1934 general strike to conclude that "the whole system of administering the labor provisions of the code has completely lost the confidence of labor in this industry and is for that reason alone incapable of functioning satisfactorily in the future."<sup>53</sup> This mediation committee recommended the establishment of a new agency which would supervise the use of the stretch-out.<sup>54</sup> Accordingly, the C.T.N.I.R.B. was abolished and the Cotton Textile Work Assignment Board was set up in October, 1934. This new board was to report by January, 1935 (later extended indefinitely), on a permanent plan to regulate work assignments; until thirty days after the board reported, there were to be no work assignment changes which would increase the effort of the workers beyond that required on September 21, 1934, and the board might investigate any complaint of assignment increases since July 1, 1933, and order a reduction if the load was excessive. The board, however, could not forbid changes in work assignments which were occasioned by new work methods, new machinery, or new product constructions—provided that the "effort" was not increased.<sup>55</sup>

The Cotton Textile Work Assignment Board finally made its report in May, 1935. The board pointed out that in setting up the work assignment in any mill there are more than 600 variables to be taken into account in setting up the jobs from the opening room through to the weave room and that, consequently, it would be impracticable to set up any general standards for the industry as a whole. The board recommended that a permanent, adequately staffed and financed agency be set up as a fact-finding body to act as an impartial arbitrator in disputes over work assignments.<sup>56</sup> Shortly after the board reported, the NIRA was invalidated and the board's recommendations went with it. This did not end the attempt to control work assignments, for in the next year and the year after bills were introduced into Congress which would, had they passed, put the entire textile industry under federal control and provide the means of controlling work assignments.<sup>57</sup> After the NIRA was invalidated, the movement toward increased work assignments took on momentum<sup>58</sup> and became more than ever a serious problem in the labor relations of the industry, for it was admitted that many attempts to make operations more efficient had resulted in overburdensome assignments.<sup>59</sup> The United Textile Workers, on its side, repeated its contention that efficiency, as such, was not an issue, but the workers did object to assignments which abused the principles of efficiency by going beyond what they considered to be the limits of human endurance.<sup>60</sup>

Most of the trouble in connection with the increase in work assignments results from faulty management and overzealous mill engineers. The failure of mills to adhere to proper material specifications, for example, means that a piece rate set on a base of proper materials yields lower earnings when inferior material is supplied to the workers. Similarly, time-study engineers and engineering firms serving cotton mills frequently must sell their services to the mill by promising large and quick savings in labor cost, and in doing this fail to take human endurance into their calculations, besides failing to make the careful preliminary studies which are necessary to proper standardization of the materials and equipment, so that the worker can handle the assignment without straining himself to the utmost limits of exertion. Even where the load is fairly adjusted after the necessary preliminary studies are made by competent engineers, and the standards for materials are carefully set, trouble may develop later. The load assigned on the basis of these set conditions of plant and material can be maintained only if these conditions do not change in such a manner as to make the load impossible for the worker to handle. The materials supplied to the weaver, for example, may be allowed by the management to slip below standard. This results in an increase in the frequency of breaks in the material, and with more breaks to repair, the load which was acceptable on the basis of the original material standard now becomes burdensome. Too many mills do not grasp the necessity for constant checking to avoid deterioration in the standards on which the work assignment was originally made.<sup>61</sup>

With the cotton mill unions relatively weak before the coming of the C.I.O., the managements usually acted first and waited for trouble to develop. There was little in the way of contractual relations between the unions and the mills and the mill owner too often consulted only his engineers and his conscience. The progress of the Textile Workers Union of America, C.I.O. in organizing the cotton mills has not, of course, eliminated trouble and conflict over the work assignment, but the increasing extent of contractual relations between the mills and organized labor hold out the possibility of peaceful settlement of these disputes. From the very beginning, one of the chief objects of the T.W.U.A. has been to give the worker a voice in determining the work assignment,<sup>62</sup> and little time was lost in accomplishing this object through agreements and strike settlements.<sup>63</sup> The great majority of T.W.U.A. contracts carry specific provisions governing work assignment changes and provisions for the handling of disputes which may arise out of such changes.<sup>64</sup>

With contractual relations spreading, the unions should be able to protect the workers from abrupt and unreasonable assignment changes and from any changes which do not share the savings between management and labor. Between 1919 and 1928, for example, output per man-hour increased 13 per cent, while in 1928 average hourly earnings were 4 per cent below 1919. From 1928 to 1932 output per man-hour increased slightly more than 7 per cent and hourly earnings declined approximately 36 per cent.<sup>65</sup> In 1933-1935 man-hour output increased 14 per cent, but hourly earnings showed a greater percentage increase partly because of the minimum wages set under the NRA.<sup>66</sup> During the decade 1928-1937 man-hour output rose more than 40 per cent, while hourly earnings rose 27 per cent.<sup>67</sup> From 1937 to 1940 man-hour output increased by 14 per cent, while 1940 hourly earnings were practically the same as in 1937.<sup>68</sup>

Before closing this chapter, a note is in order in connection with the occupational hazards of work in the cotton mills. In the matter of accidents arising out of the course of work, which comes first to mind under this heading, the cotton mill compares favorably with the average manufacturing industry. Accidents are less frequent and less severe in cotton manufacturing than in the average manufacturing industry of the country.<sup>69</sup> The cotton mill states of New England enacted workmen's compensation laws by 1915,<sup>70</sup> but the Southern states acted more slowly. By 1920 Virginia, Alabama, and Georgia had such laws but North Carolina waited until 1929 and South Carolina finally came into the fold in 1935.<sup>71</sup>

Less obvious than accidents, but more important, has been the effect of working conditions within the mill on the health of the operatives, especially in connection with respiratory diseases. Humidity is an important factor in the processing, since a hot and moist atmosphere which keeps the fibers pliable is best for manufacturing. Since before the opening of the present century the requisite humidity has been supplied by artificial means,<sup>72</sup> and it was early noted that "the humidity, which is beneficial for cotton spinning, is not always advantageous to the human being."<sup>73</sup> Besides the heat and the humidity, the atmosphere carries a quantity of cotton fiber and organic dust. Respiratory irritation from the cotton fiber and dust is common and the workers complain of nosebleed, nasal catarrh, and dry nose and throat, while the humidity causes suffering from debility and exhaustion due to profuse sweating which makes the workers prone to common colds, pneumonia, tuberculosis, and other inflammatory diseases of the respiratory tract.<sup>74</sup> Unfortunately, recent data on this

subject are lacking and the latest available material does not go beyond the middle twenties. The material up to this time, however, indicates clearly that cotton mill operatives, and especially the women among them, had an abnormally high rate of mortality from respiratory diseases such as influenza, consumption and notably, tuberculosis.<sup>75</sup> To lay all this at the door of the industry may be unfair, but considering all the questions involved and noting that the experience among English cotton mill workers has been the same, we may safely say that, by and large, the working conditions of the industry have been the most important factor in this problem.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER

<sup>1</sup> Simon Kuznets, *Seasonal Variations in Industry and Trade*, National Bureau of Economic Research, New York, 1933, pp. 292-4, 312-8.

<sup>2</sup> *Massachusetts Labor Bulletin*, *op. cit.*, February, 1900, p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> 1900 *Census*, Special Report, *Occupations*, Table 41.

<sup>4</sup> Senate Document 633, *op. cit.*, Vol. 10, Part 3, pp. 118-9.

<sup>5</sup> 1930 *Census*, *Unemployment*, Vol. I, p. 96 ff, Vol. II, p. 294-5, 299, 303-4, 308-9, combining Class A and Class B.

<sup>6</sup> Massachusetts, Department of Labor and Industries, *Report on the Census of Unemployment in Massachusetts, as of January 2, 1934*, p. 51; 1935 *Census of Manufactures*, separate report, No. 9, p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> *Report on the Census of Unemployment in Massachusetts, as of January 2, 1934*, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>8</sup> *Monthly Labor Review*, *op. cit.*, November, 1937, p. 119.

<sup>9</sup> Census of Partial Employment, Unemployment, and Occupations: 1937, *Final Report on Total and Partial Unemployment* (four volumes), Washington, 1938, Vol. I, pp. 16, 164, 168.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 6.

<sup>11</sup> 1937 *Census of Manufactures*, Part I, pp. 283-5, 299.

<sup>12</sup> 1940 *Census*, release Series P-11, *Summary*, see also the various state releases in the P-11 Series.

<sup>13</sup> *The New York Times*, August 9, 1942, Section 3.

<sup>14</sup> Kuznets, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

<sup>15</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. XVI, pp. 154-5.

<sup>16</sup> *Labor in the Industrial South*, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-4; Dunn and Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 139; National Industrial Conference Board, *Hours of Work as Related to Output and Health of Workers in Cotton Manufacturing*, Research Report #4, March 1918, p. 13.

<sup>17</sup> Jacobs, *op. cit.*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>18</sup> Massachusetts, Department of Labor and Industries, Division of Statistics, *Monthly Survey of Employment and Earnings in Representative Manufacturing Establishments*, 1926-1933, *passim*.

<sup>19</sup> Michl, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

<sup>20</sup> *Report on the Census of Unemployment in Massachusetts, as of January 2, 1934*, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>21</sup> *Final Report on Total and Partial Unemployment*, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 16, 164, 168.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. IV, p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> 1937 *Census of Manufactures*, Part I, pp. 283-5, 299.

<sup>24</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. XVII, p. 23.

<sup>25</sup> *Monthly Labor Review*, op. cit., November, 1932, p. 1017, March, 1937, p. 684; *Commercial Survey of the Southeast*, op. cit., p. 129.

<sup>26</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 694, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 531-3.

<sup>27</sup> *Monthly Labor Review*, op. cit., November, 1932, pp. 1005-17, June, 1936, pp. 1481-5.

<sup>28</sup> Kennedy, op. cit., pp. 6, 8, 10; Harry Jerome, *Mechanization in Industry*, National Bureau of Economic Research, New York, 1934, p. 80 ff.

<sup>29</sup> Industrial Relations Commission, op. cit., Vol. I, pp. 955-6.

<sup>30</sup> Kennedy, op. cit., pp. 161-6; Works Progress Administration, National Research Project, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Mechanical Changes in the Cotton-Textile Industry, 1910 to 1936*, Philadelphia, October, 1937, passim, reprinted from the *Monthly Labor Review*, op. cit., August, 1937.

<sup>31</sup> *Mechanical Changes in the Cotton-Textile Industry, 1910 to 1936*, op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Productivity and Unit Labor Cost in Selected Manufacturing Industries 1919-1940*, February, 1942, p. 34, *Productivity and Unit Labor Cost in Selected Manufacturing Industries: 1941*, Preliminary, March 2, 1942, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Industrial Commission, op. cit., Vol. XIV, p. 578.

<sup>34</sup> *Massachusetts Labor Bulletin*, op. cit., March, 1905, pp. 64-65.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 65-67.

<sup>36</sup> Industrial Relations Commission, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 956.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 986-7.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1015, 1017.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 988, 1012-5.

<sup>40</sup> Brooks, op. cit., pp. 332-5.

<sup>41</sup> The full and detailed story of this plan is given in R. C. Nyman, *Union Management Cooperation in the "Stretch Out"*, published for the Institute of Human Relations by Yale University Press, New Haven, 1934, passim. An excellent critique of the plan and its operation will be found in Sumner H. Slichter, *Union Policies and Industrial Management*, Brookings Institution, Washington, 1941.

<sup>42</sup> *Hearings on S. Res. 49*, op. cit., pp. 113-4, 140-2.

<sup>43</sup> *The Industrial Revolution in the South*, op. cit., pp. 15-17.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 165; Tippet, op. cit., pp. 116-7, 213.

<sup>45</sup> *Textile Worker*, op. cit., June, 1929, pp. 161-2; *The Industrial Revolution in the South*, op. cit., p. 165; Henry P. Kendall, "Men and Machines: A Manager's Interpretation," *The Annals*, May, 1930, p. 95; Henry Joseph Rehn, *Scientific Management and the Cotton Textile Industry*, part of a 1930 doctoral dissertation at the University of Chicago, private edition distributed by the University of Chicago Libraries, Chicago, 1934, p. 111; *The Southern Textile Situation*, op. cit., p. 119.

<sup>46</sup> Grace Hutchins, *Women Who Work*, International Publishers, New York, 1934, p. 121.

<sup>47</sup> *Report of the Board of Inquiry for the Cotton Textile Industry to the President*, September 17, 1934, pp. 2-3; this committee was popularly known as the Winant Committee and is so cited hereinafter.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3; Roos, op. cit., pp. 218-9.

<sup>49</sup> Winant Committee, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>50</sup> Hutchins, op. cit., p. 121; see almost any issue of *Textile Worker*, op. cit., during this period.

<sup>51</sup> Winant Committee, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>52</sup> Roos, op. cit., p. 218.

<sup>53</sup> Winant Committee, op. cit., p. 9.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>55</sup> *Codes of Fair Competition*, op. cit., Vol. XVIII, pp. 189-90, 635, Vol. XX, p. 418, Vol. XXI, pp. 205-9.

<sup>56</sup> Cotton Textile Work Assignment Board, *Report and Recommendations of the Cotton Textile Work Assignment Board to President Franklin D. Roosevelt for a*



*Permanent Plan for Regulation of Work Assignments in the Cotton Textile Industry*, Washington, May 13, 1935, *passim*.

<sup>57</sup> *Hearings on H.R. 9072, op. cit.*, pp. 1-15, 21; U.S. House of Representatives, Subcommittee of the Committee on Labor, *Hearings on H.R. 238*, 75th Congress, 1st Session, Washington, 1937, p. 7.

<sup>58</sup> *Hearings on H.R. 9072, op. cit.*, pp. 77-84.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 439.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 314; National Recovery Administration, Research and Planning Division, *Abstracts of Speeches, Briefs, and Letters Presented at the Public Hearing on Employment Provisions in Codes of Fair Competition, January 30 to February 2, 1935*, pp. 10-12.

<sup>61</sup> C. Candy Balderston and Victor S. Karabasz, *Management of a Textile Business*, The Textile Foundation, Washington, D. C., 1938, pp. 73-74, 90. An excellent study of the factors which make for success or failure in setting work assignments will be found in Elliot Dunlap Smith, *Technology and Labor*, published for the Institute of Human Relations by Yale University Press, New Haven, 1939, *passim*.

<sup>62</sup> Committee for Industrial Organization, *Union News Service*, May 10, 1937.

<sup>63</sup> Textile Workers Organizing Committee, *National News Letter*, August 18, 1937, March 25, 1938, August 2, 1938, September 14, 1938, October 1, 1938; *Union News Service, op. cit.*, June 14, 1937.

<sup>64</sup> Files of *Textile Labor, op. cit.*; contract files in T.W.U.A. national office.

<sup>65</sup> *Appendix, Table XI*; Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 539, *op. cit.*, p. 2; *Productivity and Unit Labor Cost in Selected Manufacturing Industries, 1919-1940, op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>66</sup> *Appendix, Table XI; Productivity and Unit Labor Cost in Selected Manufacturing Industries, 1919-1940, op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>67</sup> *Appendix, Table XI; Productivity and Unit Labor Cost in Selected Manufacturing Industries, 1919-1940, op. cit.*, p. 34; Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 539, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> *Appendix, Table XI; Productivity and Unit Labor Cost in Selected Manufacturing Industries, 1919-1940, op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>69</sup> Research Report #4, *op. cit.*, p. 56; Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 694, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 406-7.

<sup>70</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Comparison of Workmen's Compensation Laws of the United States up to December 31, 1917*, Bulletin No. 240, Washington, 1918, table on back cover.

<sup>71</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Workmen's Compensation Legislation of the United States and Foreign Countries, 1917 and 1918*, Bulletin No. 243, Washington, 1918, opposite pp. 7-8; *Comparison of Workmen's Compensation Laws of the United States and Canada up to January 1, 1920*, Bulletin No. 275, Washington, 1920, opposite p. 130, *Workmen's Compensation Legislation of the United States and Canada, 1920 to 1922*, Bulletin No. 332, Washington, 1923, p. 4; *Monthly Labor Review, op. cit.*, May, 1929, p. 135, September, 1935, p. 649.

<sup>72</sup> Burgy, *op. cit.*, p. 42; Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. XIV, p. 556.

<sup>73</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. XIV, p. 553.

<sup>74</sup> Dunn and Hardy, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-5; Rosamund W. Goldberg, *Occupational Diseases*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1931, pp. 48-49.

<sup>75</sup> Research Report #4, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-55; *Massachusetts Labor Bulletin, op. cit.*, July, 1909, p. 87; Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. XIV, *Causes of Death Among Women and Child Cotton-Mill Operatives*, pp. 18, 31-2; U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of Labor, *The Mortality from Consumption in Dusty Trades*, Bulletin No. 79, Washington, 1909, p. 729 ff; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Causes of Death by Occupation*, Bulletin No. 207, Washington, 1917, pp. 63-64, 77-78, *Preventable Death in the Cotton-Manufacturing Industry*, Bulletin No. 251, Washington, 1919, pp. 66, 78, 81-5, *Causes of Death by Occupation*, Bulletin No. 507, Washington, 1930, pp. 88-90.

THE COTTON textile industry of this country, as the first manufacturing industry to develop the modern characteristics of a mass production machine industry, went through all the abuses which were possible before the social conscience of the country was awakened. The employment of women and children for excessive hours, long hours for men as well, nightwork and low wages in the industry, all came under the scrutiny of the public eye as the awareness of the injurious effects of these practices increased. Gradually the passage of suitable legislation restricted the working hours of women and children and the age of employment; and before federal legislation entered the field only Alabama, among the cotton mill states, had no regulation of women's hours. On the subject of nightwork only two of the cotton mill states acted and the federal government never took any action on this problem. The wages of the cotton mill workers, however, never became the subject of state legislation and it was left to the national government to put a floor under the mill hand's wages—a floor which in itself was for many workers a step upward and a floor which was sorely needed.

Hourly earnings were 10 cents in 1900, rose slowly till 1916, when they reached 18 cents, jumped rapidly to a peak of 48 cents in 1920 and then dropped to 33 cents by 1926.<sup>1</sup> At no time from 1900 to 1926 did the earnings of cotton mill workers approach the average for all manufacturing industries. Hourly earnings, full-time weekly earnings, and average annual earnings of the cotton mill workers were at all times much lower than the averages for the workers in all manufacturing industries.<sup>2</sup> On the score of hourly earnings alone, cotton manufacturing was invariably at the very bottom of the scale throughout the period.<sup>3</sup> The full-time weekly and hourly earnings of cotton mill workers remained about the same in 1928 and 1930 as they were in 1926<sup>4</sup> but by 1932 hourly earnings had dropped to the incredibly low figure of 24 cents and average actual weekly earnings fell to \$10.85.<sup>5</sup> When the NRA code went into effect in 1933, a minimum hourly

rate of 30 cents per hour in the South and 32.5 cents per hour in the North was set.<sup>6</sup> By 1934, average hourly earnings had increased to 37.8 cents, and were 37.6 cents in 1935; but with the average employee working less than 35 hours per week in these two years the weekly earnings were still \$12.58 and \$13.06 per week, respectively. By 1937, hourly earnings reached 41.3 cents only to drop in the following two years. Under the influence of war demands, hourly earnings began to rise in 1940 and rose steadily month by month in 1941.<sup>7</sup> By April, 1942, hourly earnings had gone up to 51.5 cents.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, cotton goods still remained among the lowest-paid manufacturing industries in the country. Of all the manufacturing industries studied in 1940 by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, only two other fields had lower hourly earnings or lower weekly earnings than cotton goods.<sup>9</sup>

In 1938 the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act was passed<sup>10</sup> and in the spring of 1939 Industry Committee No. 1 recommended to the Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division that a minimum hourly rate of 32.5 cents be set for the entire industry. It was estimated that over 120,000 workers in cotton textiles would receive increases if this minimum was put into effect.<sup>11</sup> Subsequently these recommendations were accepted by the Administrator, and on September 29, 1939, a wage order was issued establishing the 32.5 cent hourly minimum throughout the industry.<sup>12</sup> In April, 1941, the industry committee recommended a further increase of the minimum to 37.5 cents per hour and the Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division promulgated this new minimum to be effective June 30, 1941.<sup>13</sup> On January 22, 1942, the industry committee unanimously recommended that the minimum be raised to 40 cents per hour, and on April 9, 1942, the Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division issued a wage order making this new minimum effective April 20, 1942.<sup>14</sup> By October, 1941, hourly earnings reached 50.5 cents per hour,<sup>15</sup> surpassing the 1920 peak, and in April, 1942, hourly earnings had reached 51.5 cents.<sup>16</sup>

Of interest in this connection is the relation between the wages paid in New England and in the South for, as we have noted above, the factor which enabled the South to overtake New England and dominate the industry has been largely a matter of wages. From 1912 to 1914 hourly earnings in New England were 37 per cent above those in the South. With war orders concentrated in New England in 1916-1918, the differential went up to over 55 per cent, only to drop to less than 30 per cent by 1920 as Southern wage rates advanced more rapidly than those in New England. In the next two years

wages in the South were deflated more rapidly than those in New England so that in 1922 hourly earnings in New England were 58 per cent above those of the South. By 1924 wage rates in both sections had advanced, but at unequal speeds, so that in this year the differential reached its greatest point—New England hourly earnings were 64 per cent above hourly earnings in the South. Thereafter the picture changed, for with the New England section of the industry going into an absolute as well as relative decline, wages in New England declined while those in the Southern mills tended to stay constant. The wage differential which had reached a peak of 64 per cent in 1924 had dropped to 26 per cent in 1932 because, just subsequent to 1930, wages in New England were cut more drastically than those of the South. Wage cuts in the South soon got into full swing, however, and by July, 1933, the differential had again widened to 39 per cent. At this point the NRA came into the picture to put a damper on the incessant seesaw of competitive wage manipulation in which the regions were indulging. The code for the industry set hourly minima of 32.5 cents in the North and 30 cents in the South—thus fixing a small differential at the minimum. As might be expected, this measure proved effective in narrowing the wage advantage of the South. By August, 1934, average hourly earnings in New England were only 18 per cent above those of the South. Never before had the two regions come so close to equality in their wage scales.<sup>17</sup> The end of the NRA saw a slight widening of the differential to 21 per cent in 1935 and 1936, and to 26 per cent in 1937—with the latter increase in the margin due to a much more rapid increase in the wage rates in the Northern than in the Southern section of the industry. By August, 1938, hourly earnings in both sections had declined but the Northern rates dropped faster than those of the South so that the differential amounted to 22 per cent.<sup>18</sup> Thus the New England-South hourly wage rate differential which went as high as 64 per cent in the middle twenties, dropped to less than 20 per cent in the NRA period, and widened after the collapse of the code. Just before the effective date of the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, the average hourly earnings in the Northern section of the industry were 22 per cent above the corresponding figure for the South, and by September, 1940, after almost two years of the act, this relationship remained unchanged.<sup>19</sup> Up to February, 1942, war-time conditions had made little change in the differential, which was 21 per cent in this month.<sup>20</sup>

Under the recommendations of the industry committees in the

operation of the Fair Labor Standards Act, no regional difference in the minimum hourly rates has been allowed and we may therefore expect that the regional differential in average hourly earnings will never again reach the peak of the mid-twenties. With unionism pushing forward in both areas, the differential may again drop to the low of the NRA period or disappear entirely.<sup>21</sup>

The New England-South differential has always aroused much interest and controversy and the reasons for the difference have been sought in various factors within the industry and in the New England and Southern economic structures as a whole. According to the Southern mill interests, the reasons for the lower Southern wages are, first, that the Southern worker makes a coarser grade of goods and therefore the industry in the South cannot afford to pay wages as high as New England and, second, that the Southern worker has lower living costs than the New England worker and in addition receives numerous free services from the mill owner so that, although the money earnings of the Southern workers are less than those of the New England workers, actually the real earnings of both groups are the same.<sup>22</sup> This argument in part or in its entirety has been accepted even by some who hold no brief for the Southern mill interests,<sup>23</sup> but a close examination of the facts shows that there is no sound basis for either of the Southern mill owners' contentions.

It is true that the Southern mills in general make a lower grade of goods than the New England mills so that the value added by manufacture is lower for the Southern worker than for the New England worker. This means, of course, that the margin available for the payment of wages is less in the South than in New England. However, analysis of the data for the mid-twenties showed that the Southern mills paid out a smaller proportion of this margin to the worker than the New England mills. In terms of actual figures for 1925, the New England mills paid out to labor 63 per cent of the value added by manufacture while in the South the mill owners paid out to the workers 51 per cent of the value added by manufacture.<sup>24</sup> In general, throughout the twenties when the margin between New England and Southern wages reached a peak, the Southern mills paid out to the workers a smaller proportion of the value added by manufacture than did the New England mills.<sup>25</sup> The increase of wage rates in the South during the NRA period narrowed the margin between New England and Southern wages and by 1935 the Southern mill was paying its workers a greater proportion of the value added by manufacture than the New England mills.<sup>26</sup> This, of course, hap-

pened only after the government had stepped in to set the minimum wage rates for the industry.

The contention of the Southern mill interests that in spite of lower money earnings the Southern workers' real earnings equal those of the New England workers because the former has a lower cost of living and receives numerous free services from the employer likewise cannot be substantiated. To take the weakest point in this argument first—the so-called “free services” provided for the Southern mill worker by the mill owner are actually also received by the New England worker in the form of public services. As one observer pointed out not so long ago, the New England worker “receives, with one or two exceptions, all of the services furnished in Southern mill villages, but he receives them as a citizen of his respective community rather than as a worker in his respective factory.”<sup>27</sup> The Southern mill owner who installs a sewerage system and paves the roads in his mill village adds this to his cost of running the mill village and then considers this cost an addition to the Southern worker's wages which should be calculated to offset the margin between money wages in New England and in the South. Such a procedure is, of course, absurd and accounts for the high estimates of “free services” which Southern mill owners like to add to the money wages of their workers. The American Cotton Manufacturers Association (the Southern group), for example, estimated the value of nominal charges for village facilities and the value of welfare work at \$4.36 per worker per week.<sup>28</sup> The addition of this amount to the workers' wages would, of course, make the Southern wages compare more favorably with those of New England, though even the addition of this generous estimate to the Southern workers' earnings would still have left the Southern worker earning 15 per cent less per year than his New England brother in the mid-twenties.<sup>29</sup> Aside from the fact that this estimate was based on the cost of only the very best mill villages and welfare programs, the entire procedure is false and lacking in candor for the reasons noted just above. Other similar estimates suffer from the same defects.<sup>30</sup> A study of the actual cost of mill welfare programs, as distinct from over-all figures which include every aspect of mill village operations, showed that only a handful of mills spent as much as \$13 per year, per worker, for the most elaborate programs,<sup>31</sup> and many mills do little or nothing along these lines. To add even the cost of these welfare programs alone to the wages of the Southern mill worker in an attempt to close the gap between New England and Southern wages is almost as unreasonable as to add in the mill village

costs. Here again the Southern mill owner who, for example, provides a baby health clinic or recreational facilities may consider these an addition to wages, but the New England worker may just as well receive these services from his municipal government. All these attempts of the Southern mill owner to make the wages of his workers look larger by the addition of the value of various facilities and services boil down to the simple fact that the New England worker receives the same items in a different guise, so that the regional difference in money wages is in no way modified by any of these devices.

On the subject of regional differences in the cost of living the situation is similar. Southern mill interests have persistently asserted that in the South the cost of living is so much lower than in New England, that the lower Southern wage is offset by the lower cost of living so that the actual plane of living of the Southern worker equals that of New England. Here, again, the facts do not bear out the contentions of the Southern mill owner, for at best the difference in the cost of living in favor of the South is slight and comes nowhere near justifying the difference between Southern and New England wages. Criticisms of the thesis that the cost of living in the South was lower than that of New England started to appear early in the present century,<sup>32</sup> and though for a long time data on this subject remained scarce, a comparison of food costs made near the end of the first decade of the century showed Southern food costs to be only 10 per cent below the costs in Fall River.<sup>33</sup> The difference between Fall River wages and Southern wages was, of course, much greater. The same study showed that, due to the flimsy construction of Southern mill houses at this time, the expense of house heating for the Southern worker was actually higher than it was for the Fall River mill hand.<sup>34</sup> The National Industrial Conference Board study of the cost of the minimum American standard of living, which was discussed above, provided further data on this score. A survey of the cost of maintaining this minimum standard of living in two New England mill towns and three Southern mill villages (using mill house rents in the South) in 1919 and 1920 showed that two of the three Southern towns had higher costs than either of the New England towns while the third Southern town was below only the one higher-cost New England town.<sup>35</sup> Certainly these data provide no basis for a justification of lower wages because of an alleged lower living cost. Still another investigation in the late twenties reached the conclusion that food prices in New England and in the South were practically the same and that in comparing living costs in New England and the South

the only possible factors in favor of the South were mill village house rents and lower fuel prices,<sup>36</sup> certainly not enough of a margin in any event to bring the plane of living of the Southern worker up to that of New England.<sup>37</sup> The proponents of the thesis that living costs in the South were low enough to bring the Southern real wage up to that of New England have seldom attempted to substantiate the thesis with factual material, but one such attempt in the early thirties<sup>38</sup> merely succeeded in showing that possibly the Southern mill worker had a slightly lower cost of living by about 7 to 8 per cent while the Southern wage was below the New England wage by several times this margin.

Interest in comparative living costs in New England and the South was stimulated during the NRA period because of the demand by Southern mill owners for a lower minimum wage in the South as against New England. The South did finally win its fight for a lower minimum wage in the code when the New England weekly wage for 40 hours was set at \$13 whereas the Southern rate was fixed at \$12. This differential was conceded by the New England mills solely on the basis of the rent saving for Southern workers who lived in mill houses, and this in part was the basis of the Southern demand. Shortly thereafter the National Industrial Conference Board started a continuous series of data covering the question of regional differences in the cost of living. An examination of this series shows that the regional differences in the cost of living, while slightly in favor of the South, were much less than the difference in wages between New England and the South.<sup>39</sup> A study of the cost of living in 59 cities scattered throughout the nation, in 1935, showed that living costs were much alike—in fact, less than half a dozen cities deviated from the national average by more than 10 per cent.<sup>40</sup> The cost of living in the Southern cities was but 5 per cent below the average for all the cities covered in this survey.

Under the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act, the industry committee covering the cotton textile industry was face to face with the practical problem of whether or not to allow for a regional differential in the minimum wage. In this connection the industry committee examined the study of intercity differences in the cost of living mentioned just above. The Bureau of Labor Statistics also made a special survey of small Northern and Southern cities, which showed that the cost of living in the Southern cities was only 3 per cent below that of the Northern cities.<sup>41</sup> The committee, after considering the data, reached the conclusion that different minimum wage rates for dif-



ferent areas would be undesirable because "the evidence indicated that the average cost of an equivalent standard of living varied but slightly among the regions [and] variations in cost between cities within a region were much greater than variations among regions."<sup>42</sup> Actually, the only request for a regional differential came from a small group of Southwestern mills.<sup>43</sup> The representatives from the Southeastern mills, which comprise the great bulk of Southern cotton manufacturers, did not make any direct request for a regional differential but confined itself to a general attack on the setup of the committee, made liberal and unsubstantiated generalizations to the effect that living costs were lower in the South, and attacked the motives of the parties presenting material which clearly indicated that no regional differential was justified.<sup>44</sup> In their attack, however, the Southern mill owners overlooked a traitor within the ranks of the industry, for the Cotton-Textile Institute in the same proceedings advocated a uniform minimum wage rate throughout the country.<sup>45</sup>

Thus collapsed the Southern argument for wages lower than those paid in New England, and well it may have, for the Southern operative's pay was the means by which the South wrested supremacy in the industry from New England. The New England mill worker's pay was low enough in comparison with other industries and his plane of living was on a corresponding level, but the Southern worker's pay and plane of living was even lower. The lack of bargaining power of the Southern worker, based in part on the lack of unionism and in part on the large and ever-present unused reserve of labor on the poverty-stricken farms of the South, left the Southern mill worker literally at the mercy of the mill owner. Indeed, some not-too-pleasant indications of the low plane of living of the Southern mill worker as compared to the New England worker are contained in reports on illness and dietary disease among the former. Pellagra is a disease whose origin is found in certain diet deficiencies—notably a lack of lean meat, butter, cheese, milk, eggs; and fresh vegetables. A study of the incidence of pellagra made by the United States Public Health Service in several South Carolina mill villages in 1916-1921 showed a frequency of pellagra much beyond what the experience of local physicians seemed to indicate, particularly among the children. As might be expected, the striking rate of the disease was in inverse relation to income—when the mills were running full-time and employment was plentiful there was less pellagra than when short-time and low incomes were the rule.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, the general sickness rate among Southern cotton mill families was related to their income and only the highest

wage group showed a sickness rate which approximated the average results reported by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company's investigation of over half a million people—the rest of the Southern mill hands had higher illness rates.<sup>47</sup> A study of absences of women operatives because of illness in Northern and Southern mills showed a greater incidence of sickness among the latter group than among the former,<sup>48</sup> and the relation between income and illness is too well-known to need further elaboration here.

In spite of the general decline in the incidence of pellagra in the country as a whole in recent years, it is still the most common dietary disease in the country and is especially prevalent in the Southeast.<sup>49</sup> Just what the status of pellagra is among cotton mill hands of the South at the present time is difficult to state, for pellagra is a characteristically underreported disease.<sup>50</sup> A glance at some of the diets which Southern mill owners in the last decade have recommended to their workers, as an indication of how to live within the income provided by the mill, shows that the recommended diet is almost guaranteed to result in pellagra.<sup>51</sup> Let us hope that the Southern will workers never have to follow the advice of their employers on this score.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER

<sup>1</sup> *Appendix, Table XI.*

<sup>2</sup> Paul H. Douglas, *Real Wages in the United States, 1890-1926*, Houghton Mifflin Co., New York and Boston, 1930, pp. 246, 258.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 100-1.

<sup>4</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 539, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 663, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>6</sup> *Codes of Fair Competition, op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 15-18.

<sup>7</sup> *Appendix, Table XI*; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Hours and Earnings in the United States, 1932-40*, Bulletin No. 697, Washington, 1942, p. 143.

<sup>8</sup> *Labor Information Bulletin, op. cit.*, June, 1942, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 697, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-2.

<sup>10</sup> Public No. 718—75th Congress.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, press release, 231, March 21, 1939, 305, May 23, 1939.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 422, September 29, 1939.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 1371, April 30, 1941, 1457, June 14, 1941.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 1727, January 22, 1942, 1775, April 9, 1942.

<sup>15</sup> *Labor Information Bulletin, op. cit.*, December, 1941, p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, June, 1942, p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Historical Review of Wage Rates and Wage Differentials in the Cotton-Textile Industry*, Serial No. R. 242, pp. 4-7, reprinted from the *Monthly Labor Review* for May, 1935.

<sup>18</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 663, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-2.

<sup>19</sup> Serial No. R, 1414, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>20</sup> National War Labor Board, press release, B 141, August 5, 1942, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> The wage data for the period before 1935 covered "New England" and the "South Atlantic States and Alabama." These data were described as of "New England" and the "South." Since 1935 the data described as of the "North" and "South" include in the North certain Middle Atlantic states as well as New England, while the South includes certain states west of Alabama. Thus the comparison of the differential before and after 1935 is not absolutely accurate, for the addition of the Southern states west of Alabama lowers the Southern average, while the inclusion of the Middle Atlantic states in the North raised the Northern average. Therefore, the actual differential between the principal New England states (Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island) and the principal Southern states (Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama) before 1935 is somewhat larger than that given in the text. It also follows, therefore, that since 1935 the differential between "North" and "South" is somewhat less than the actual differential between the principal New England and Southern states.

<sup>22</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 484, 490-1, 573-4, 779; Southern Textile Manufacturing, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-4; "The South's Development," *Manufacturers Record*, December 11, 1924, Part II, pp. 193-5.

<sup>23</sup> Lemert, *op. cit.*, p. 65; *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill*, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-5; Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, pp. 225-6, 501, Vol. XIV, pp. 575-6; *Gaston County: Economic and Social*, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30; Samuel Huntington Hobbs, Jr., *North Carolina. Economic and Social*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1930, p. 148.

<sup>24</sup> *Industrial Structure of New England*, *op. cit.*, pp. 311-12.

<sup>25</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Wages and Hours of Labor in Cotton-Goods Manufacturing, 1910 to 1926*, Bulletin No. 446, Washington, 1927, p. 18, *Wages and Hours of Labor in Cotton-Goods Manufacturing, 1910 to 1928*, Bulletin No. 492, Washington, 1929, p. 22, Bulletin No. 539, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>26</sup> 1935 *Census of Manufactures*, separate report, No. 9, p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> *Labor in the Industrial South*, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

<sup>28</sup> G. T. Starnes, "Effects of Industrialization on Labor," *Proceedings of the South-eastern Economic Association*, 1930, p. 143.

<sup>29</sup> Rhyne, *op. cit.*, pp. 102-4.

<sup>30</sup> *Southern Textile Manufacturing*, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-4.

<sup>31</sup> Herring, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-2.

<sup>32</sup> Massachusetts, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor*, 1905, pp. 56-7.

<sup>33</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. XVI, pp. 25, 178.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>35</sup> Research Report #22, *op. cit.*, p. 17; Research Report #24, *op. cit.*, p. 13; Special Report #8, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

<sup>36</sup> *Labor in the Industrial South*, *op. cit.*, pp. 122-4, 126-7.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 98-103, 154.

<sup>38</sup> Lemert, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-8, 73.

<sup>39</sup> National Industrial Conference Board, *Conference Board Bulletin*, December 10, 1935, p. 90, July 31, 1937, p. 87, October 17, 1938, p. 86, *Differentials in Industrial Wages and Hours in the United States*, Studies #238, New York, 1938, pp. 1, 7, 13-14, 17-18.

<sup>40</sup> Research Monograph XII, *op. cit.*, p. iii.

<sup>41</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 694, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 100-101.

<sup>42</sup> *Report and Recommendation of Industry Committee No. 1 for the Textile Industry to the Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division of the United States Department of Labor*, May, 1939, pp. 3-4.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 45.

<sup>44</sup> *Statement of the Minority of Industry Committee No. 1, Submitted to the Administrator of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938*, pp. 1-6.

<sup>45</sup> Cotton-Textile Institute, *Statement Submitted to Industry Committee Number 1*

appointed under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, The Cotton-Textile Institute, Inc., New York, January, 1939, p. 66.

<sup>48</sup> U.S. Treasury Department, Public Health Service, *A Study of Endemic Pellagra in Some Cotton-Mill Villages of South Carolina*, Hygienic Laboratory Bulletin #153, January, 1929, pp. 65-6.

<sup>49</sup> *Monthly Labor Review*, op. cit., February, 1919, p. 221 ff.

<sup>48</sup> Women's Bureau, Bulletin No. 52, op. cit., p. 125.

<sup>49</sup> Paul De Kruif, *The Fight for Life*, Harcourt, Brace and Co., New York, 1938, pp. 10, 20, 23; National Resources Committee, *The Problems of a Changing Population*, Washington, 1938, p. 178.

<sup>50</sup> *The Problems of a Changing Population*, op. cit., p. 178.

<sup>51</sup> Jacobs, op. cit., p. 78; *Hearings on S. 158 and H.R. 4557*, op. cit., p. 538 ff.

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# 13

## UNIONS BEFORE THE UNITED TEXTILE WORKERS

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THE NARROW scope of union organization has always characterized labor in the cotton manufacturing industry. Perhaps earlier than in any other field, the work in the cotton mill became largely that of unskilled and semiskilled machine tending, with only a small proportion of the operatives occupying posts that required more than nominal apprenticeship and skill. Until the past few years, whatever significant organization there has been has involved the skilled hands. In the few efforts to organize all the operatives, however, the textile unions have reproduced in miniature the history of the labor movement as a whole in the United States. In their troubles with the immigrant laborer and his strikebreaking, the unskilled and their easy replacement, the large proportion of women and children, the internecine struggles with radical elements, and the craft locals versus the industrial type of organization, the textile unions in themselves went through a tortuous maze of struggle in their efforts to organize the industry in this country.

To delineate better the complicated history of the many unions which have operated among the cotton mill workers, we shall begin with an account of the unions which existed before the formation of the United Textile Workers in 1901. Since the Southern section of the industry was almost untouched by unionism in this period, the story will be largely that of New England unions.<sup>1</sup>

Aside from loose groups formed around a particular grievance or dispute, the earliest organization of employees in the industry was formed among the mule spinners. So far as the proportion of eligibles organized is concerned, the mule spinners' union was the strongest individual unit in this early period. Theirs was an occupation demanding a great deal of skill, there were few women to reckon with, and the total number of mule spinners was smaller than for any other occupational group except the loomfixers. They were generally among the best-paid, were not easily replaceable, and soon gained a reputation among employers as troublesome. The union was largely com-

posed of and led by English operatives and their descendants, together with some Irish, and many of the spinners coming from England brought their organization leaders with them. In fact, some of the American local unions functioned as branches of Lancashire unions.

The mule spinners were locally organized in Fall River before 1850, but after an unsuccessful strike against a wage cut in this year the unions were broken up by blacklisting. During the strike the mule spinners collected \$20,000 for strike relief, which was a considerable sum for that time, and even printed a journal with the aid of the weavers. The blacklisting temporarily killed the union in Fall River, but it scattered among the other unorganized New England centers men who were imbued with the ideas of unionization. It was not until 1858 that the Fall River mule spinners succeeded in reorganizing their own unions and formed an association of New England locals. Since little mule spinning was ever done in the South at any time, this "Benevolent and Protective Association of United Operative Mule Spinners of New England" may be considered a national union. The union was of the federal type, with a large degree of autonomy for the locals. It was the declared policy of the union to secure a closed shop and to prevent strikes by referring disputes to arbitration wherever possible. The new union had been in existence only a few years when the Civil War began, and the enlistment of its members left the union with only a paper existence.

Reviving in 1866, the Mule Spinners' Union began a vigorous fight for shorter hours both through union action and through legislation. It sent speakers throughout New England and very likely co-operated with the New England Labor Reform League in this work. A strike over hours in 1868 destroyed the union everywhere except in Fall River, but in 1870 a wage strike broke the Fall River organization as well. These defeats and disruptions, however, seemed only to strengthen the mule spinners' addiction to organization, for in 1873 the Fall River union began anew in a struggle for hours legislation and against wage cuts, which also saw the beginnings of organization among the weavers and card room operatives of this city. By this time the mule spinners in other cities had also revived their locals. Though the mule spinners temporarily succeeded in staying the wage cuts, a long strike and lockout which was lost in 1875 broke up all the unions except the Fall River mule spinners. The end of this conflict saw the first large-scale use of the "yellow-dog" contract by the employers. While the yellow-dog contract usually stipulates that the worker, as a condition of employment, will not join a union, in

this case the employers contented themselves with imposing the condition that the workers should join no organization in which individual members were governed by the majority on questions of hours or wages. The Fall River mule spinners refused to be bound by these contracts and apparently the mill owners did not care to enforce the contract by discharging all the mule spinners. The union, therefore, continued in existence and by 1879 locals in other cities were again organized and the national union continued in existence from this time on.

In 1878 the Mule Spinners' Union joined the International Labor Union which was then being organized by a combination of Socialists and Ira Steward's 8-hour group. The I.L.U. was making a special effort to attract cotton mill workers' unions. The I.L.U. claimed 8,000 members in 1878 and in the following year was reported to have the affiliation of 5,000 in Fall River alone, but though the I.L.U. was dominated by textile workers in general, its membership among cotton mill workers alone cannot be determined. The officials of the I.L.U. and the Mule Spinners' Union soon fell out. The I.L.U. accused the spinners of trying to "sell out" an 1879 strike in return for benefits to the spinners alone. The spinners were accused also of refusing to strike with other unions against a wage cut in 1880 in return for the nomination of the secretary of Mule Spinners' Union for the Massachusetts legislature on the Republican ticket. And, as a matter of fact, the spinner did receive gains and call off the 1879 strike in Fall River while the other crafts stayed out and lost.<sup>2</sup> The Mule Spinners' Union in turn wondered what good the I.L.U. affiliation was doing them. There is no record to show that the Mule Spinners' actually withdrew from the I.L.U., but the latter was extinct by 1882 in any event.

During these years the Mule Spinners' Union had constantly to be on the alert against the tactics used by the manufacturers, who were far from reconciled to the existence of the union. The blacklist proved a potent weapon in many cases, and a labor spy also made his unsavory appearance. The Fall River Manufacturers Board of Trade even hired a "spotter" to roam the mills looking for union committeemen and collectors who were the special object of the blacklist and had been escaping by a change of name. These tactics were mostly ineffective, for the union continued to grow.

Technological advance was on the side of the manufacturers, however. Alongside of mule spinning there had developed another process known as frame or ring spinning. Ring spinning had been invented in 1828. By 1860 the majority of spinning frames were ring frames, but

not until 1871 were the technical difficulties of high-speed spinning on rings overcome.<sup>3</sup> Ring spinning always had the advantage of needing little skill, so that women and children could be employed, but the advantage was now enhanced. The entire question was brought home vividly to the manufacturers in the 1879 Fall River strike when the mills which used mule spinning had to close down or were badly handicapped while the mills using ring spinning were able to operate with the unorganized women and children. From this time on, the strategic position of the mule spinners was constantly being undermined. The proportion of ring spindles greatly increased. In 1890 there were 14.2 million spindles in the United States and there were already 3.5 million more ring spindles than mule spindles. From 1890 onward the number of ring spindles increased greatly while the number of mule spindles remained practically stationary to 1900 and began to decline by 1905.<sup>4</sup> Though, by 1900, 90 per cent of the mule spinners were organized, the total membership was surely not over 3,000 and was probably nearer 2,000.

During the upsurge of the Knights of Labor in the mid-eighties there were organized several trade assemblies of mule spinners which were probably locals of the Mule Spinners' Union as well. The Mule Spinners' Union itself affiliated with the Knights of Labor but withdrew in 1888. Little is known about this phase of the mule spinners' activities, but more complete information is available concerning their relations with the American Federation of Labor. The Mule Spinners' Union joined the Organized Federation of Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada in 1881 when this organization, which later became a part of the A.F. of L., was formed. This affiliation with the A.F. of L. continued after the formation of the United Textile Workers in 1901.

The history of the Mule Spinners' Union in the period before 1901 shows that the union was a strictly craft organization of skilled workers. The only lapse from craft exclusiveness came in 1898 when the mule spinners, faced with the eventual disappearance of their occupation, consented to admit ring spinners, but in 1901 they gave up this field to the newly organized United Textile Workers. As will be noted later, the Mule Spinners' Union maintain its identity and kept clear of the attempts to form a national union of all workers in the industry before 1900, but it did help other occupational groups to form their own unions. The union believed in a federal structure with a great deal of autonomy in all matters for the local unions. The Mule Spinners' were in the forefront of the battles for legislative re-



striction of hours and its members were forbidden to work at night although this resulted in a loss of members in some cases where only nightwork was available for unemployed mule spinners. Strike benefits were paid when the strike had been authorized by the Executive Council and a worker blacklisted after such a strike continued to receive the benefit for thirteen weeks if he was unemployed that long. A death and disability benefit also was paid if the mule spinner met with an accident in the course of his employment. The union was extremely conservative and was largely composed of operatives of English and Irish origin. It did not attempt to secure written agreements with the manufacturers, avoided strikes wherever possible in the later years of the century, and preferred to settle disputes by mutual concession and arbitration. When a strike was called, however, the union's full resources were thrown into the fray, the fight was carried to the bitter end, and the locals helped one another generously whenever necessary. At the end of the century the union was in excellent financial condition, with considerable sums invested in the cotton mills, but its future was definitely limited. Before many years of the present century were to pass, mule spinning became an interesting but unimportant phase of the industry—a sort of vermiciform appendix of the spinning process.

While the mule spinners were winning their struggle for organization and recognition, other crafts began to follow in the same path. The weavers may have been organized as early as 1850 in Fall River, but after losing the strike of that year no information appears about them for almost twenty-five years. In 1873, in an attempt to stem the tide of wage cuts, the weavers of Fall River were aided by the mule spinners in forming the Weavers' Protective Association. Within a year a comparatively strong organization had been built and locals were established in other centers. The disastrous strike of 1875 in Fall River, which hit the mule spinners badly, wiped out the newer weavers' union in this city. The union broke up and the treasury was divided to help the blacklisted members find work in other districts while yellow-dog contracts were forced on the rest of the strikers who returned to work. The Fall River strikes of 1879 and 1880 saw the reorganization of the weavers in secret locals under the International Labor Union, but lost strikes left the weavers with only fragments of an organization in the early eighties. By 1885 there had evidently been a revival of the weavers' unions in Fall River with several thousand members, and it is possible that there were organizations in other cotton mill towns as well. There were also weavers' assemblies

in the Knights of Labor during this period. In Fall River itself, the Fall River Weavers' Protective Association was faced with a rival in the Amalgamated Weavers' Union formed in 1889, but the Fall River Trades Council succeeded in bringing the two unions together in 1890 as the Fall River Weavers' Progressive Association.

With the Fall River weavers organized by 1890, unions of weavers elsewhere began to organize in earnest. The New Bedford Cotton Weavers' Protective Association was formed in this year and after 1895 almost every cotton town in New England had its weavers' union. In the same year a Massachusetts State Federation of Weavers was formed which was said to represent over 7,000 weavers in this state. By 1897 weavers' locals from other states were admitted and the name was changed to the New England Federation of Weavers. In the following year the name was again changed—this time to the National Federation of Textile Operatives, which in spite of the title remained a union confined to weavers. The union had a death and strike benefit system based on dues paid. There were two levels of dues payments which in turn governed the size of the benefit payments.<sup>5</sup>

Later to organize than the mule spinners and weavers were the card room operatives who were largely women. Toward the end of 1873 the card room workers of Fall River started their union with the help of the mule spinners. Over 1,000 members were secured in this city by 1874 but the 1875 strike wiped out the 'Carders' Union via the blacklist and the yellow-dog contract. Five years later there was but one local carders' union in Massachusetts, and though there were assemblies of carders in the Knights of Labor, it was 1890 before strong locals were organized among these workers. By 1894 the Fall River Carders' Union claimed 1,200 members and in 1895 this local joined with the mule spinners of Fall River and New Bedford to raise a joint fund for sympathetic strikes and other matters of mutual interest. The Mule Spinners' and the Carders' also agreed that the latter should organize the ring spinners, but in 1898 jurisdiction over this group was taken over by the Mule Spinners'. In neither case does it appear that actual efforts were made to organize the ring spinners. In 1897 a state amalgamation of Carders' locals in Massachusetts was formed and in the following year the organizational structure was completed with the establishment of the National Union of Card Room Operatives. The union was strongest in Massachusetts, but had locals in other New England states as well. The Fall River membership in 1900 was about 1,200,<sup>6</sup> but no general member-

ship figures are available. The union had a strike and death benefit system based on the dues paid. The dues depended upon the worker's usual wage and the benefits were scaled accordingly.<sup>7</sup>

Next in chronological order of organization were the loomfixers. The loomfixers were, with the mule spinners, the most skilled of the cotton mill workers, but they were far less attracted by unionism than the mule spinners. Perhaps because they were the best-paid in the mill and were practically irreplaceable on short notice, perhaps because they were so few in number that grievances could be settled more readily than with a larger group, the first signs of organization did not come until the upsurge of the Knights of Labor in the mid-eighties. The organization of the National Loomfixers' Union in 1890 probably included remnants of the rapid decline of the Knights of Labor. The 1898 convention of the Loomfixers' Union included delegates from locals in nearly every cotton mill center in New England. In this year the Loomfixers' Union applied to the A.F. of L. for a charter. At this time the A.F. of L. already had a national union in the International Union of Textile Workers (which will be discussed below) whose jurisdiction covered all textile workers except the mule spinners, who were separately affiliated with the A.F. of L. The I.U.T.W. objected to the chartering of any more textile unions and succeeded in barring the Loomfixers' from the A.F. of L. The Loomfixers' Union did not care to enter the I.U.T.W. and so remained unaffiliated. In 1900 the membership of the Loomfixers' was put at 1,500. They were a conservative group which emphasized apprenticeship training and co-operated with the manufacturers in setting up textile schools in Fall River and Lawrence. Though they supported the other unions in strikes and other matters of mutual interest, they were willing to sign agreements calling for 30-day strike notices.

Last to organize were the slasher tenders and drawing-in girls. The slasher tenders may have been organized during the disastrous Fall River strike of 1875, but not until 1894 was the Fall River Slasher Tenders and Drawing-in Girls Union formed. Locals were soon formed in other towns and by 1899 the National Slashers' Association had been established. In Fall River by 1900 nearly all the slasher tenders were union members. The union paid strike and lockout benefits in addition to a death benefit.

By 1900, therefore, there were five organizations which could be called national craft unions—the Mule Spinners', the National Federation of Textile Operatives (weavers), the Carders', the Slashers', and the Loomfixers'. These unions were practically confined to New

England, though there were some locals in other Northern states such as New York. Southern operatives did not enter into their calculations at all. Within New England, the main concentration of union strength was in Fall River and New Bedford. In these centers the unions had attained a large degree of recognition from the manufacturers, and since by tradition changes in wages in these cities were followed by the rest of the New England mills, the effect of the actions of these unions spread beyond their main strongholds. Though during a dispute the unions were never entirely free of the threat of a large-scale employer offensive involving the blacklist and yellow-dog contract, as a whole the employers in 1900 accepted the presence of the unions in these cities. Since the unorganized unskilled workers could not effectively strike unless the craft unions gave the word, the unions exercised a conservative influence which the mill owners appreciated and of which the craft leaders were proud.<sup>8</sup> To co-ordinate their activities the craft locals in some cities formed councils. The Fall River Textile Council and the New Bedford Textile Council were in existence before 1895 and by 1900 a similar group was operating in Lawrence.<sup>9</sup> Whenever a question about a general change in wages or hours arose the manufacturers' representatives met with the Council rather than with the individual craft locals as such.

These craft unions were loosely organized along federal lines, and the tradition of local autonomy was very strongly entrenched. They were largely composed of and led by those of British and Irish origin and since these groups dominated the skilled occupations it was natural that their interest did not extend to the unskilled who made up the bulk of the operatives. The mule spinners and the loomfixers were the most skilled and the best-organized, but even in the occupations which were semiskilled in nature, such as weaving, the membership of the unions was drawn from the fine goods weavers of Fall River and New Bedford rather than from among the weavers on coarse goods who were less advanced technically. The organized craft workers were separated from the rest of the operatives not only by their skill but also by the barriers of language and cultural background, for the latter were a melange of a dozen groups of diverse national origins. Maintenance of their separate craft unions was of paramount importance to these national crafts even though local circumstances sometimes led to the formation of locals combining several crafts.<sup>10</sup> Keeping in mind this background of conservative craft unions firmly established in New England, the difficult struggle to form an all-inclusive union in textiles will be more readily understood.

The first possibility of a national union uniting all textile mill workers came under the International Labor Union which was organized in 1878. The I.L.U. membership was not confined to textile workers, but textile union leaders were prominent in its formation and a special effort was made to attract the unskilled cotton mill workers. The I.L.U. claimed 8,000 members in late 1878 and in the following year was said to have enrolled 5,000 in Fall River alone. The Fall River membership must have been practically all in cotton mills, but the general membership certainly covered other workers as well. The I.L.U. and the Mule Spinners' soon differed on matters of finance and policy and the I.L.U. gradually disintegrated. Its total life span was less than four years.

The phenomenal growth of the Knights of Labor in 1885-86 brought a collection of members from cotton mills which might have been welded into a national union had not the demise of the K. of L. been even more rapid than its advance. Though there are no accurate figures on the number of cotton mill workers who joined the K. of L. in mixed or trade assemblies, there were organized at least 121 trade assemblies, whose occupational designation and location indicates that the membership came from the cotton mills. Of these 121 assemblies, 99 were in the Northern states (mostly New England, the rest in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania) and 22 in the South. The majority of these trade assemblies in both regions were formed in 1886. There were also cotton mill workers in the mixed assemblies of the K. of L. The 1886 strike and lockout in the cotton mills of Augusta, Ga., for example, was conducted by a mixed assembly whose 2,300 members were probably mostly cotton mill workers. The Knights of Labor also was connected with several other cotton mill disputes in the South in 1886 and 1887, though no trade assemblies of the mill workers were formed in these places. The K. of L. represented the first attempt at organization in the South—an area with no industrial tradition, little unionism of any kind, and due to the lower grade of goods made, there was an even smaller fringe of skilled hands in the cotton mills here than existed as the nucleus of unionism in New England. At its peak the K. of L. may have had 25,000 members in all branches of textile manufacturing, with an indeterminate proportion of these in cotton mills proper. With the decline of the K. of L. after 1886, the Southern cotton mill workers were left without organization except for the one or two K. of L. assemblies which straggled on, while the New England workers returned to their craft locals or did without unions.

From its inception in 1881 the American Federation of Labor took an interest in the unorganized cotton mill operatives of the North. The Mule Spinners' Union was among the first affiliates of the A.F. of L. and gave active aid in the efforts to spread the gospel of organized labor. As early as 1883 the A.F. of L. gave financial assistance for the organization of locals in New England, but no concrete results were recorded. In 1890 the A.F. of L. began to work for the amalgamation of the scattered groups and unions in the textile industry into one large national union. The result was the formation on March 30, 1890, of the International Union of Textile Workers. Because of internal dissention, however, the union did not formally receive its A.F. of L. charter until 1896. The new union started with locals in Lawrence, Lowell, Fall River, and New Bedford and its jurisdiction covered all textile manufacturing occupations with the exception of mule spinning, since the Mule Spinners' Union held an earlier charter from the A.F. of L. From the beginning, however, this jurisdiction of the I.U.T.W. existed largely on paper only, for most of the strongest craft organizations of New England refused to join. The initiation fee in the I.U.T.W. was \$1, local dues were 50 cents per month, and the per capita taken by the national union was 5 cents per month. In contrast to the regular strike benefits paid by the stronger craft unions, the I.U.T.W. undertook to pay these benefits only as funds permitted.

The I.U.T.W. had a turbulent existence from its very inception. A rift appeared between the strongly craft-minded cotton locals of New England and the operatives in the diversified textile industries of the Middle Atlantic states whose thinking ran more along "industrial" lines of union organization. The craft leaders preferred a large degree of local autonomy and a low per capita tax to the national union. The I.U.T.W. officials were on the side of a strong national treasury and centralized control of the actions of the individual locals. Nevertheless, there was no open break until 1895. In 1894 and 1895 a Socialist group within the I.U.T.W. gained control of the organization and this led to the withdrawal of two large craft locals whose combined membership totaled 3,000. The Socialist victory led also to a split between the I.U.T.W. and the officials of the A.F. of L. who claimed that the union was being diverted to political purposes. The 1896 convention of the I.U.T.W. was controlled by the Socialist element which was considering taking the union out of the A.F. of L. altogether and affiliating with the Socialist Trade and Labor Alliance, but an attempt to make this change was defeated in a stormy conven-

tion the next year, and President Gompers of the A.F. of L. was able to announce the complete reorganization of the I.U.T.W. with officers sympathetic to the aims and methods of the Federation.

Meanwhile, in 1895, the A.F. of L. made an appropriation for organizing the cotton mill workers in the South, who up to now had not figured in the plans of the I.U.T.W. and had been without any organization since the decline of the Knights of Labor after 1886. During 1896 and 1897 some slight progress was made along these lines. In 1898, however, a large strike against wage cuts in Columbus, Ga., saw the formation of a new local union under a Southerner, Prince W. Greene. The new union applied to the A.F. of L. for affiliation and was directed to join the I.U.T.W. The craft secession and the A.F. of L. purge of the I.U.T.W. had left the latter with little more than the skeleton of an organization, so the Southern workers found themselves in control of the I.U.T.W. Prince W. Greene became president of the I.U.T.W. and remained in this post until 1900, when he became secretary-treasurer until the formation of the new A.F. of L. affiliate, the United Textile Workers of America, in 1901. During these years, although reports show that the I.U.T.W. was not inactive in New England, the main membership strength was in the South and the central headquarters were in Columbus, Ga. The A.F. of L. continued to give financial assistance and leadership in the drive to organize the South, with the I.U.T.W. playing a secondary role. In 1899 and 1900 over 30 new locals were organized in Southern cotton mill towns. The I.U.T.W. paid a per capita tax to the A.F. of L. in 1900 based on 3,400 members, but it claimed 5,000 members. Since the turnover of membership was high, especially in the South, the number of workers who passed through the union was probably much above any official figures or claims. In the South alone, the maximum I.U.T.W. membership at any one time was probably around 4,000. Only in the South was the I.U.T.W. membership in cotton mills; in New England, after the secessions of 1894-5, whatever I.U.T.W. activity took place was in other textile fields and not in cotton manufacturing. For all practical purposes, during the closing years of the nineteenth century the I.U.T.W., though technically a union of all workers in the textile industry, was really little more than a scattering of locals in Southern cotton mill towns. The membership of these Southern locals fluctuated greatly and very often disappeared entirely between strikes, so that there was a continual expense for organization work which brought no permanent results in the form of self-supporting locals.

After the control of the I.U.T.W. passed to the South in 1898, the loss of strikes in Southern mills in the last few years of the century left the union with debts which could be liquidated only by securing New England locals which were on a permanent dues-paying basis in contrast to the ephemeral Southern locals. The I.U.T.W. made moves in this direction and some New England local unions were seriously considering reaffiliation. The 1899 I.U.T.W. convention, however, decided to work along broader lines by trying to win over the national craft unions which were well-established in the New England cotton mills. In 1900 representatives of the I.U.T.W. met with leaders of the National Carders' Union, the National Federation of Textile Operatives (weavers), the National Loomfixers' Association, the National Association of Mule Spinners, and the National Slashers' Association. The I.U.T.W. proposed that these craft organizations should dissolve and their locals should become locals of the I.U.T.W. This was unsatisfactory to the craft unions, for the history of the I.U.T.W. had not been such as to assure the crafts that their cherished rights of local autonomy would fare well under the I.U.T.W. Therefore, these five cotton craft unions of New England joined with some knitters' unions of New York and Pennsylvania to form a new organization—the American Federation of Textile Operatives—which was to apply to the A.F. of L. for a separate charter. Meanwhile, the A.F. of L. was following closely the attempt to consolidate the textile unions, and brought its influence to bear on the I.U.T.W. In truth, the A.F. of L. was getting tired of helping keep the I.U.T.W. on its feet in the face of lost Southern strikes.

The Southern strikes which opened the twentieth century showed the pattern of employer action which soon became familiar to the Southern mill workers who dared assert a right to unionism. In April of 1900 the A.F. of L. sent C. P. Davis of High Point, N. C., on an organizing tour which quickly brought results. Davis worked quietly, and finding the employees willing joiners, many mills had strong union nuclei before the mill owners were aware of what was happening. But when they did find out they acted quickly and decisively. The first clash occurred in May at the Proximity Mills near Greensboro, N.C. About 1,000 workers were employed, of which some 150 had joined the union. As soon as the employer learned that a union movement was afoot, he closed the mill and the company store. With the nearest town two miles away, the closing of the company store left many families without provisions as well as without contact with the outside world, for the post office was in the company store.



Families having union members were ordered to vacate the mill houses. This treatment almost doubled the number of union adherents. After one week of the lockout, the mill resumed operations under yellow-dog contracts. Most union members refused to sign the yellow-dog contracts and left the village to try for jobs elsewhere. They soon found a practical blacklist in operation, for those from the troubled mill were turned away.<sup>11</sup>

Within a few months the union campaign ran into the solid opposition of the mill owners of Alamance County, N. C., with the same results. Nearly all of the 20 mills of this county had been touched by unionism. When a union member was discharged for an alleged violation of plant rules in September, 1900, the union struck. Within an hour, the other two mills under the same ownership were subjected to a sympathy strike, and about 800 employees were out. The management refused to meet with the union committee of employees except as individuals, and refused to deal with the representative of the I.U.T.W. The mill owners of the county wanted a definitive struggle, and all announced that after October 15th they would dispense with the services of all but nonunion operatives. Those who refused to leave the union were ordered to vacate the mill houses. About 4,000 union members and sympathizers stayed out, rather than work under the conditions set down by the mill owners. With no housing available for the evicted workers, and no money for any purpose, desertions from the union became numerous within a month, and the union collapsed. Workers leaving the county to find work in other mills soon found themselves turned away, for it was apparent to other mill owners that the only ones seeking work from the troubled county were those who refused to return to their old jobs on the condition that they give up the union. Similar employer tactics were effective in Fayetteville, N. C., in the same year.<sup>12</sup>

In early 1901 the I.U.T.W. was ready to accept any form of consolidation within the A.F. of L., and after conferring with the A.F.T.O. a specific procedure was worked out. All the national craft unions, except the Mule Spinners', turned their funds and records over to an A.F. of L. representative, pending a conference set for November, 1901. This conference was conducted by James Duncan, first vice-president of the A.F. of L., and an entirely new organization was brought into being—the United Textile Workers of America. The new union embraced the majority of the organized cotton mill workers of New England—there being little actual union member-

ship left in the South by this time. The Mule Spinners' became an affiliate of the new union, but because of its long affiliation with the A.F. of L., its separate charter and organization were to be retained until the U.T.W. proved itself permanent. The Mule Spinners', having admitted ring spinners since 1898, now gave this jurisdiction to the U.T.W.

With the formation of the U.T.W., control of the A.F. of L. textile union returned to New England. What little Southern activity remained was ended, and deprived of outside support, the Southern movement collapsed. The Southern leaders of the I.U.T.W. were replaced in the U.T.W. by the craft union leaders of New England.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise specified, this chapter is based on Lahne, *op. cit.*, *passim*, and Brooks, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> Robert R. R. Brooks, *When Labor Organizes*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1938, p. 267. Hereinafter cited as *When Labor Organizes*, in contradistinction to this same author's history of the United Textile Workers which is cited as Brooks.

<sup>3</sup> Kennedy, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 32.

<sup>5</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. XIV, p. 573.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 579.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 579.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 989, Vol. VII, pp. 343-8, Vol. XIV, pp. 559, 556-7, 574-5, 579-81.

<sup>9</sup> Massachusetts, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor*, 1898, p. 616; Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-7; letter to this author from Wm. E. G. Batty of the New Bedford Textile Council, April 15, 1941.

<sup>10</sup> Massachusetts, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor*, 1898, p. 574 ff.

<sup>11</sup> *Strikes and Lockouts in North Carolina*, *op. cit.*, pp. 136-8.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 138-40; *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill*, *op. cit.*, pp. 192-5.

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## 14      *THE UNITED TEXTILE WORKERS AND ITS RIVALS*

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THE ORGANIZATION of the United Textile Workers of America in 1901 marks the beginning of the modern history of unionism in cotton manufacturing. The new union soon ran into trouble. The loss of the 1902 strike in Augusta, Ga., wiped the union out of the South. There were numerous secessions by local unions which came into conflict with the national office over questions of per capita tax and local autonomy. These conflicts finally led in 1916 to the formation of the National Amalgamation of Textile Operatives, the only right-wing competitor of the U.T.W. From the other side came the Industrial Workers of the World, the first of a series of left-wing rivals for the allegiance of the cotton mill workers.

The formation of the United Textile Workers saw the majority of the organized cotton mill workers enrolled under the banner of the new union. In 1902, the first full year of existence, the U.T.W. listed some 7,700 members in the cotton manufacturing branch of the textile industry, and to this must be added the 2,600 members claimed by the Mule Spinners' Union<sup>1</sup> which was loosely connected with the U.T.W. The U.T.W. cotton mill membership was almost entirely confined to New England, for the U.T.W. left the South to its own devices after the loss of the strikes of 1900-1902.

The Augusta, Ga., strike of 1902, in fact, ends the story of labor conflicts and unionism in the South in this early period. The I.U.T.W. was succeeded in 1901 by the United Textile Workers as the new A.F. of L. affiliate in the field of cotton mill unionism. The Augusta Textile Council, which was composed of several locals in that city, decided to ask for 10 per cent wage increases and selected the largest mill in the city as their point of attack. The mill owners, organized in their association, met the demand on this mill, which was supported by a strike, by a complete lockout of the 7,000 workers in the city. The U.T.W. could not formally "authorize" the strike because to do so would involve the union in the obligation to pay fixed strike benefits, but it decided to give all possible aid in other ways. The

locals of the U.T.W. were assessed for funds, a commissary relief station was set up, and a tent colony was organized to house workers evicted from mill houses. After seven weeks the mills reopened and at the end of another six weeks the U.T.W. surrendered with a claim of "moral victory." The union had spent \$10,000 which did little except to teach the U.T.W. that a large membership in the South during a strike was quickly followed by a relapse. Within a year after the strike the U.T.W. had practically disappeared from the South.<sup>2</sup>

Southern locals sent delegates to the U.T.W. convention in 1902 and 1903, but from this time until 1913 no Southern delegate appeared except in 1908.<sup>3</sup> After the visit of John Golden, vice-president of the U.T.W., to the South in 1903, no U.T.W. organizer or agent visited the South for several years, though occasional short-lived locals were founded in Southern mills towns by local advocates of unionism.<sup>4</sup> Even within its New England bailiwick, the U.T.W. organization was incomplete, for there remained many small local unions without a national affiliation.<sup>5</sup> Thus, though the U.T.W. start was auspicious in that the majority of organized cotton mill workers were in its ranks, it was handicapped by the fact that there still remained independent local craft unions and it had no organization in the growing and important Southern section of the industry. Furthermore, the proportion of cotton mill workers who were organized was very small. Out of some 300,000 workers who were in cotton mills when the U.T.W. was formed only about 10,000 (including the Mule Spinners') were in the U.T.W. and not many were in small independent local unions.

But perhaps more important than these defects was the survival of the spirit of narrow craft unionism within the U.T.W. itself. The persistence of the demands for extreme local autonomy and low per capita payments to the national union, indicated that the U.T.W. was to have a hard time trying to solidify the locals into a coherent organization which would be able not only to hold whatever gains the union had made, but which would also extend organization in New England and try to organize the South whose competition was affecting the New England mills. Many of the craft locals which entered the U.T.W. felt that this alone was a sufficient concession to unity and they insisted upon full local treasuries and local control to meet their own needs. The national officers, on the other hand, were convinced that it was not sufficient to meet once a year for discussion—the national union should have power to act and control the local unions, and this meant money. The chief source of national

funds was the per capita tax and around this symbol and source of policy much of the early U.T.W. history revolves. Personal factors also were involved. The local officials had already lost prestige in their subordination to the U.T.W. and they were not inclined to emphasize this by depleting the local treasury which they controlled. When local officials attained national office this factor of personal prestige shifted to the opposite side of the ledger and former advocates of local autonomy became champions of central control.<sup>6</sup>

While the new union was struggling with internal difficulties it found itself involved in two large strikes. Both strikes were lost and, though the U.T.W. acquired neither prestige nor power thereby, the loss did not seem to have any lasting injurious effect on the union. The first large-scale conflict of the new century in New England took place in Lowell in 1903 and was quickly followed by the 1904 Fall River strike. In February of 1903 the Lowell Textile Council demanded a 10 per cent increase. The mills claimed that they could not afford such an increase and several conferences and attempts at conciliation failed. The U.T.W. here, as in Augusta, Ga., in 1902, did not formally "authorize" a strike because of financial considerations, but decided to give all possible aid outside of fixed strike benefits. The Lowell Textile Council on March 28th gave notice that a strike would be effective on Monday, March 30th, unless their wage demands were met, but at noon on March 28th the mills posted notices that the plants were closing for an indefinite period. The relatively skilled workers were the only ones who were organized at all and of some 19,000 workers only 1,000 were union members. But all the workers were following the union lead. The U.T.W. immediately sent \$2,000, the A.F. of L. made a nation-wide appeal for funds, the local unions of the U.T.W. contributed almost \$15,000, and in addition the Fall River and New Bedford craft locals sent donations to their respective crafts in Lowell.

With such a small proportion of the workers organized, the mills had hoped up to the last minute to be able to run the plants in spite of the strike. At a meeting of the union weavers on March 24th, to which the nonunion weavers were invited, speeches were made in English, French, and Greek and as the strike drew near many non-union workers expressed themselves in favor of going out. This enthusiasm spread to the Greeks who constituted the most serious element of danger to the success of the strike. So rapidly did the strike sentiment spread that the mill owners gave up the idea of keeping the plants going. As soon as the strike got under way the Greeks held separate meetings of their own and even decided to finance their

own strike aid without help from the unions. The Poles and the Portuguese also launched their own prostrike organizations, to act in conjunction with the unionized workers. Many of the French Canadians made preparations to return to Canada for the duration of the strike or left Lowell to seek work elsewhere. In the first ten days of April about 800 trunks were checked for Canadian trains and another 400 went to other mill areas. By the first week of May about 900 Greeks had gone to seek work elsewhere and hundreds of houses in Lowell were vacant.

When the strike began, some fourteen organizations were represented at the meetings of the Lowell Textile Council. Some of these were permanent unions while others were improvised under the stress of existing circumstances. In addition to the unions based on occupations there were separate organizations for the Greeks, Poles, and Portuguese. Shortly after the strike began, a new influence, upon which the strikers had not counted, began to make itself felt. The price of raw cotton began to rise to such an extent that the manufacturers were able to sell their stocks at a considerable profit. One mill actually was able to declare a dividend on this basis alone. In this way the mills minimized or neutralized entirely the loss caused by the strike itself and they became indifferent to the question of resumption of work. The increase in union membership, which came with the strike, came to a halt when the advantageous position of the mills became apparent. Those who joined under the enthusiasm and stress of the strike now began to drop out.

On June 1st the mills reopened and offered employment to all at the old wages. On the first day from one-third to two-thirds of the various mill forces returned and the percentages increased until two weeks after the opening some 70 per cent of the full force of the mills had returned. The small body of original unionists held out until June 21st when the Textile Council called off the strike. The Portuguese, Poles, and Greeks, who had been classed as unskilled help only, had meanwhile been advanced to better positions when they went to work while the more skilled workers stayed out, and when the unions terminated the strike many of the positions of their members had been filled and the union members were completely displaced. Thus the manufacturers not only won the strike itself, but they built up a new force of skilled workers outside of the unions and, since the strike had provided these newly promoted with their opportunity, the mills expected that they would be loyal nonunionists for some time to come.<sup>7</sup>

The 1904 Fall River strike marked still another loss for the U.T.W.

The conflict resulted from wage cuts and the introduction of automatic looms and increased machine loads. The wage cuts in some instances ran as high as 30 per cent and when a final cut of 12½ per cent was announced for July 25, 1904, the workers protested. The Fall River Textile Council had previously secured strike approval from the U.T.W. and when the mill owners refused arbitration the workers struck on July 25th. The mills were closed down and some 26,000 operatives were out, about 5,000-6,000 of whom were union members. Since Fall River wage rates generally governed the rest of the industry, the U.T.W. decided that a compulsory assessment was unnecessary and relied on the self-interest of the other locals to bring in financial help. The strike was peacefully conducted on both sides and sentiment favorable to the strikers was clearly indicated by the generous financial support from outside sources. The A.F. of L. raised over \$33,000 for the strikers by voluntary assessments, the U.T.W. itself collected about \$55,000 from various sources, and the Fall River Textile Council raised additional thousands. Altogether nearly \$160,000 was spent in the support of the strike. The union paid strike benefits ranging up to \$5 a week for its members, and relief stations supported largely by outside contributions were set up for nonunion strikers.

At the end of eighteen weeks the mills started up again and ran short shifts. At a meeting four weeks later, the workers voted to continue the strike, but on January 18, 1905, they were forced to accept defeat. The wage cut was accepted and future wages were to be set by the Governor of Massachusetts in accordance with the condition of the industry as indicated by the mill margin.<sup>8</sup> Though the settlement provided that there was to be no discrimination in re-employment, actually such discrimination was widespread and some 13,000 workers were reported to have migrated elsewhere in search of work so that in the following year many of the Fall River mills were shorthanded. In spite of the loss of the strike, the unions increased their membership.<sup>9</sup>

The determination of wages by the mill margin led to a further cut in May, 1905. In October the mills and the unions agreed to adopt a sliding scale tying wages to the mill margin on print cloths. Though this method was to have a one-year trial, the workers soon became dissatisfied because of the violent and frequent wage changes occasioned by the weekly computation of the margin. Essentially the method was unsound because it was based on print cloth margins and originated at a time when Fall River made print cloths exclusively, whereas by 1905 only one-third of Fall River production was in prints. With the scale based on the print margin, a drop in this margin meant a lower wage for all even though two-thirds of Fall River production,

which was fancy cloth, may have had a substantial and prosperous margin. The scheme was also subject to unpredictable speculative influences in the price of raw cotton. In July, 1906, the plan was abandoned, but thereafter the margin increased so that in April, 1907, a new agreement on a sliding scale was adopted which provided for less frequent changes—every six months instead of the old weekly basis. In the next three years the margin dropped badly and wages were heavily cut and in February, 1910, this scheme also was abandoned. Actually, the mill margin was not an adequate or accurate indication of the profitability of the mills because profits were affected not only by the margin but by the volume of trade as well. Furthermore, the question of what constituted the proper scale of wages was left undetermined, for there was no criterion of the wage-paying ability of the industry, especially in Fall River where little was known of the capitalization or financial policy of the mills.<sup>10</sup>

The trouble over the per capita tax and central control within the U.T.W. started practically as soon as the union was organized in 1901, and from that time until 1915 the U.T.W. drifted back to a position of internal conflict similar to that of the old I.U.T.W. in the mid-nineties. The local unions moved in and out of the U.T.W. so often and so rapidly that frequently the records do not even make it possible to decide just what was the status of a particular group. The New Bedford loomfixers' local left the U.T.W. immediately after the 1901 convention but returned in 1906. Meanwhile, in 1905, a few small locals of loomfixers in Massachusetts also withdrew. The loomfixers of New Bedford, Fall River, and Pawtucket, in 1907, formed the Loomfixers' Protective Alliance with the approval of the U.T.W.—the ostensible purpose being to provide mutual support to striking loomfixers' locals though it seems actually to have become the nucleus of secession groups among the loomfixers. After the 1907 increase in per capita taxes, the Lawrence loomfixers withdrew and in the next few years were joined by locals in other towns. The unaffiliated loomfixers' group failed in its effort to get a charter from the A.F. of L., but it did succeed in balking U.T.W. efforts to win over loomfixers in the towns where the seceded locals were established. By 1915 some of the secessionists seem to have returned to the U.T.W., but their relations with the national union continued to be strained and when the National Amalgamation of Textile Operatives was formed in 1916 there were eight loomfixers' locals represented, including the large locals of Fall River, New Bedford, Lawrence, and Manchester; and in the next year these were joined by eight more.<sup>11</sup>



The weavers were close behind the loomfixers in the separatist movement. In 1903 the New Bedford weavers tried unsuccessfully to get the U.T.W. to admit any national union on the same basis as the Mule Spinners'. In the next year the New Bedford weavers failed to get official recognition for a strike, so they withdrew and were soon followed by the Lawrence local. Later the U.T.W. made partial concessions in the way of giving other national craft unions a status similar to that of the Mule Spinners'. This action, combined with U.T.W. support of the weavers in their strike of 1904 in Fall River, brought the New Bedford weavers back in 1907. The breach did not remain healed for long, however, for in that same year the per capita tax was raised and the New Bedford weavers left again in 1908, taking with them the Fall River and Adams weavers' locals as well as some other craft locals. By 1909 the National Federation of Weavers was formed by these groups, and the new federation was going after the remaining U.T.W. weavers' locals. Though the U.T.W. got the Central Labor Union in some towns to expel the renegades, the Fall River and New Bedford Textile Councils refused and the U.T.W. could not afford to alienate its other locals in these cities by trying to force expulsion. The U.T.W. even co-operated with the New Bedford Textile Council in the 1912 weavers' strike and the only thing the U.T.W. got out of the strike was the stigma of the strike's loss. The weavers and the U.T.W. failed to settle their differences and in the formation of the National Amalgamation of Textile Operatives, in 1916, the weavers played a prominent part.<sup>12</sup>

Other locals which left the U.T.W. before 1915 and became part of the N.A.T.O. were the New Bedford slasher tenders, who left in 1905, the Fall River slasher tenders, in 1908, the Lawrence slasher tenders and the Biddleford quillers and beamers, in 1909. And in 1915, whatever U.T.W. locals remained in New Bedford and Fall River left to join the N.A.T.O.<sup>13</sup>

Of a somewhat different character was the break between the U.T.W. and the Mule Spinners'. It will be remembered that the Mule Spinners' entered the U.T.W. in 1901 as a national union paying the per capita tax in a lump sum. It was understood that when and if the U.T.W. was a success, the Mule Spinners' would disband their national union and enter the U.T.W. as locals. In 1908 the Mule Spinners' gave the U.T.W. the right to organize the craft in places where there were less than seven mule spinners. Since the U.T.W. had been forced to make concessions to the weavers and loomfixers on the question of national craft unions and had enough trouble with-

out looking for more, the status of the Mule Spinners' was not challenged for the first ten years of the U.T.W.'s life. In 1912 this autonomous status was questioned at the U.T.W. convention and the Mule Spinners' answered that the time had not yet come when the U.T.W. could do as much for them as they did for themselves. Two years later a resolution was introduced at the U.T.W. convention to allow any five locals to form a "federation" within the union and pay a per capita tax of 15 cents per member per quarter—at a time when most U.T.W. locals were paying 20 cents per member per month. Though the resolution was defeated, its significance in relation to the status of the Mule Spinners' was apparent, since the latter was actually in the position of a federation paying the lower tax. The U.T.W. officers avoided taking any action, but in 1915 when the tax was raised to 20 cents per member per month for all locals, the Mule Spinners' took the initiative and withdrew from the U.T.W. but managed to keep its A.F. of L. charter a few years longer.<sup>14</sup>

Although the dramatic 1912 strike in Lawrence involved mostly woolen mill workers, cotton mill workers also were involved. The 1912 Lawrence strike marked the high point of the activity and influence of the Industrial Workers of the World in the textile field. Before the strike the I.W.W. had three small branches in Lawrence. The English branch had been organized about 1905, the Franco-Belgian in 1907, and the Italian in 1911. These three branches were affiliated in one local which just before the strike had a dues-paying membership of between 300 and 600.<sup>15</sup> The immediate cause of the strike was a pro-rata reduction of earnings when the prevailing 56 hours weekly were reduced to 54 by law, but also at issue were the generally low wages and the bonus and premium systems which had been introduced as speed-up devices.

The law reducing hours to 54 was to become effective January 1, 1912. The mills posted notices of the changed schedule but made no mention of wages, whereupon the English branch of the I.W.W. attempted to find out the mills' intentions, but the mill agents either refused to see the committee or denied the authority of the I.W.W. committee to deal with wages. In addition to the several hundred I.W.W. members among the unskilled in Lawrence, the U.T.W. had some 2,500 of the skilled workers enrolled in its craft locals. After the I.W.W. committee was rebuffed, strike sentiment spread. When on January 11th the workers' pay envelopes showed that their fears had been fully justified, bedlam broke loose in the mills. The walkout started immediately in the weaving department of the Everett cotton

mill and in the spinning department of the Arlington Mill (woolen). Within three days, more than 25,000 workers were on strike and the mills had closed. A meeting at the Franco-Belgian hall brought together delegates from the English, French, Italian, Belgian, and Polish groups, and a telegram was sent to Joseph Ettor of the General Executive Board of the I.W.W. asking him to come to Lawrence to take charge. Ettor came and was made head of the strike committee which had representatives of each nationality. The committee's demands were a 15 per cent increase in wages, double pay for overtime, the abolition of bonus and premium systems, and no discrimination against strikers.

The strike immediately took on all the bitter aspects and violence of a class struggle. Mass picketing and clashes with the police and militia were the order of the day. On January 16th the mills reopened under armed protection, and friction between the A.F. of L. and I.W.W. developed over scabbing by A.F. of L. mechanics. On January 19th about 1,000 of the skilled and better-paid workers also walked out. The mills refused to have any dealings with the strike committee. An attempt to frame the I.W.W. by the planting of dynamite led to the bringing in of still more companies of the militia. A prominent businessman was later convicted and fined for this offense. Also involved in this incident was President Wood of the American Woolen Company who was never able to explain a payment to the proved purchaser of the dynamite. Meanwhile the successful leadership of the strike by the I.W.W. aroused the envy of John Golden of the U.T.W., who attempted, with the help of the A.F. of L. officialdom, to wrest control of the strike from the I.W.W. Unfortunately for Golden, the mill owners were no more willing to deal with him than with the I.W.W.-led strike committee.

The strike continued to the tune of mass picketing, parades, and miscellaneous violence. After one of the largest demonstrations and parades, a clash took place in which a woman striker was killed and Ettor and Arturo Giovannitti, a revolutionary poet and editor of *Il Proletario*, were arrested. Ettor, however, had kept William Haywood (later secretary-treasurer of the I.W.W.) informed of developments and on January 24th Haywood had arrived in Lawrence and taken command so that the arrest of Ettor on January 29th failed to disrupt the strike. Some indication of the harshness with which arrested strikers were handled is found in the fact that in one day alone a police court judge sentenced 34 strikers to one year in jail.

With a pressing relief problem on their hands, the strike committee enlisted all possible outside aid. Appeals for funds were sent to

labor groups, Socialists and sympathizers, and a relief committee of 11 nationalities was set up. The rank and file of the A.F. of L. contributed about \$11,000, the Socialists about \$40,000, and other I.W.W. locals sent \$16,000. To alleviate the sufferings of the strikers, the strike committee adopted the European custom of sending strikers' children out of the area to the homes of friends and sympathizers. On February 10th 119 children, accompanied by suitable publicity, were sent to New York City and on February 17th another 92 followed. The chief of police of Lawrence disapproved of this procedure and on February 24th stopped a shipment about to entrain by dragging the parents and children off to jail. This callous action aroused a great outcry and prevented further official interference.

On March 1, 1912, the American Woolen Company and a number of other mills announced a 5 per cent wage increase and a willingness to meet with the strike committee. The committee held out for 15 per cent. Another conference was held on March 7th at which the employers agreed to announce their definite terms within a few days. On March 11th the strikers put on their biggest demonstration, with over 20,000 on the picket line. On the following day the mills met the strikers' demands and on March 13th the strike ended in most mills. By the end of March the few remaining mills fell into line and the children came back to Lawrence. The strikers had won increases of from 5 to 20 per cent, with the largest raises going to the unskilled. A few days before the final settlement the influence of the strike was reflected in wage increases throughout the New England textile industry. Ettor and Giovanitti were brought to trial and were acquitted.

At the end of the strike the I.W.W. claimed 20,000 members in Lawrence, but the actual membership was probably about half of that. By the following year the membership of the I.W.W. had sunk to little more than that before the strike. The I.W.W. leaders were scattered after the strike and the mills had established an espionage system which kept I.W.W. activity at a minimum. The U.T.W. effort to take over control of the strike, its attempt to prevent the I.W.W. from soliciting funds among trade-unions, and its wild accusations of "revolution" in this strike for simple and legitimate trade-union objectives, earned the U.T.W. nothing but the criticism of the progressives and the distrust of thousands of Lawrence workers.<sup>16</sup>

Before proceeding with the story it may be well to review this first fifteen years of U.T.W. history. The founding of the U.T.W. in 1901 brought together the majority of organized cotton mill workers of the country—nearly all of whom were located in New England. Numer-

ous small local craft unions remained aloof, but the U.T.W. did have the basis of a commanding position among the unions of industry. Of some 15,000 organized workers in the entire textile industry in 1902, about 13,000 were in the U.T.W. and its affiliated Mule Spinners',<sup>17</sup> and over three-quarters of the U.T.W.-Mule Spinners' total was found in the cotton mills.<sup>18</sup> From the beginning the U.T.W. was plagued by conflicts and secessions over the per capita tax and local control. The per capita started at 5 cents per member per quarter and within a few years was doubled.<sup>19</sup> What with threatened secessions, actual secessions, and local charter revocations, the 1907 convention sought to compromise on the issue by adopting a dual tax plan. Old locals could pay 15 cents per quarter and received neither the established strike benefits nor the death benefits which were started in this year. New locals (and old locals which chose to) were to pay 20 cents per month and receive a strike and death benefit for the members of 6 months' good standing.<sup>20</sup> As is the case with many compromises, satisfaction was short-lived, especially since the "low" 15 cent rate itself was an increase over the 10 cents previous paid. With the continuation of secessions and the formation of new locals, notably those resulting from the 1912 Lawrence strike, the 1914 convention put an end to the dual tax system and all locals were required to pay 20 cents per capita per month to the parent union.<sup>21</sup> This crystallized the breach between the U.T.W. and the local craft organizations and in the following year (1916) the National Amalgamation of Textile Operatives was formed. The formation of the N.A.T.O. was significant because it marked the definitive failure of the U.T.W. to hold the allegiance of the strongest craft organizations in the New England cotton mills.

During these years of conflict and secession, the U.T.W. was able to maintain its membership ranks only by the constant organization of locals to replace those which had left. After 1904 the Mule Spinners' constantly reported 2,200 members, but in view of the declining use of mule spinning this became progressively more of an overestimate. The U.T.W. cotton mill membership which started at 7,700 in 1902 and rose to 11,000 in the following year, dropped back to about 9,500 in 1904-1906, rose briefly in 1907-1908, and then dropped back again to less than 9,500 in 1909-1911. The 1912 Lawrence strike raised the membership briefly to over 12,000 and then it dropped again. By 1915, just before the formation of the N.A.T.O., the U.T.W. ranks had risen to over 12,000.<sup>22</sup>

The U.T.W. cotton mill membership was concentrated in New

England. U.T.W. activity in the South practically disappeared after the loss of the 1902 strike. In 1912 a U.T.W. organizer succeeded in organizing locals in two Virginia cities, and at a Knoxville mill which did not oppose the union a large number were enrolled. In 1913 the Knoxville union undertook to share expenses with the national union for an organizer who would devote his time to the South, and the U.T.W. agreed to try again. The U.T.W.'s return to the South on any but the smallest scale was marked by the 1914 Atlanta strike, which had been preceded by a series of small skirmishes in Georgia. The commencement of organization work in a large bag and cotton mill in Atlanta and the formation of a union committee was immediately met by discriminatory discharges and resulted in a strike involving some 900 employees. The mill pursued the customary tactics of evictions and cutting off the credit of the workers at the company store. The grievances of the workers on almost every condition of employment, the tactics of the company, and the dramatic aspects of the strike, such as the setting up of a tent colony to care for the evicted strikers, brought public attention and sympathy to the strikers and the union therefore succeeded in raising considerable sums among the A.F. of L. unions and the public. Working against the strikers were hunger, cold, and the increasing numbers of strikebreakers who passed through the picket lines. Gradually the strikers, wherever possible and with the union's approval, drifted off to seek work in other mills. Though the strike was actually lost not long after it began, it was almost a year before the U.T.W. gave up the struggle.<sup>23</sup> The U.T.W. had lost again in the South, but perhaps something had been gained by the attention the strike attracted and the scattering of the strikers resulted in the carrying of the seeds of unionism to other sections of the South.

Before the period of the First World War the U.T.W. found itself at odds mainly with locals and unions which were more conservative and more craft-conscious than itself—not that the U.T.W. could by any stretch of the imagination be called radical or anticraft, for up to 1911 well over 85 per cent of the U.T.W. locals were organized on a craft basis.<sup>24</sup> The relations between the U.T.W. and the N.A.T.O. in the war period were not exactly cordial, but both unions were growing and there was little time for mutual recrimination. Not so between the U.T.W. and the Industrial Workers of the World. During its brief but dramatic history the I.W.W. was the holy terror of textile unionism and the U.T.W. yielded to no one—not even the employers—in its hatred of this swift-moving, hard-striking group

which appealed primarily to the unskilled and unorganized foreign-born of the industry. The U.T.W. organized mainly in craft locals and sought written agreements with the employers; the I.W.W. organized on industrial lines and disdained written agreements.<sup>25</sup> The textile industry was the most successful field of the I.W.W. activity in the East, and as early as 1905 had a branch established in Lawrence.<sup>26</sup> In the next few years other branches were formed in Lawrence and in a few other New England towns as well.<sup>27</sup> In 1906-1910, the I.W.W. participated in several strikes, including one in the craft stronghold of New Bedford in 1910.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile in 1908 the I.W.W. formed the National Industrial Union of Textile Workers, which in 1910 claimed over 4,000 textile workers as members.<sup>29</sup> This would put almost half the entire I.W.W. membership in the textile industry.<sup>30</sup> In 1911 the N.I.U.T.W. had thirteen locals, of which three were in Massachusetts.<sup>31</sup> The big blow-off, however, did not come until 1912 in the strike at Lawrence. The I.W.W. participated in at least five textile strikes in 1912, including one in New Bedford,<sup>32</sup> but it was the Lawrence strike which involved the most workers and received the most publicity because it was here that the I.W.W. brought into play all its paraphernalia of mass meetings, mass picketing, and every other possible dramatization of the conflict. The U.T.W. and the I.W.W. both had locals in Lawrence and both entered the fray. They fought each other with perhaps as much vigor as the I.W.W. fought the employers. The I.W.W., in the middle of 1912, claimed 20,000 members in Lawrence, 28,000 in Lowell, and locals of 800 to 5,000 in nearly every New England textile city.<sup>33</sup> In Lawrence the workers won the pay increase they were striking for, but the effect upon the unions is more problematical. The U.T.W. certainly gained members, and so did the I.W.W., but the I.W.W. had no organization to hold its newly acquired members and they left the union rapidly.<sup>34</sup> Though part of the U.T.W. gains in Lawrence also melted away the significant aspect of the strike from the point of view of union history is that after this strike the I.W.W. ceased to be an important factor in cotton mill unionism, although it remained active in the textile field as a whole until after the First World War.<sup>35</sup> The I.W.W. started two short-lived locals in South Carolina in 1914.<sup>36</sup> In 1919 the I.W.W. had perhaps 1,000 members in the entire textile industry.<sup>37</sup> By 1920 only a skeletal I.W.W. organization was left in Fall River and New Bedford, and though the union was active in the 1920 New Bedford strike and the 1922 New England strike,<sup>38</sup> the I.W.W. had long since lost its importance among the cotton mill unions of the country.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER

<sup>1</sup> Leo Wolman, *Ebb and Flow in Trade Unionism*, National Bureau of Economic Research, New York, 1936, pp. 178-9.

<sup>2</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 295-6; McMahon, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 66-70.

<sup>4</sup> George Sinclair Mitchell, *Textile Unionism and the South*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1931, p. 32.

<sup>5</sup> *Massachusetts Labor Bulletin*, *op. cit.*, August, 1902, p. 95.

<sup>6</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-91; *Textile Unionism and the South*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Senate Document 633, *op. cit.*, Vol. 10, Part 3, pp. 291-3; Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 296-7.

<sup>8</sup> The mill margin is obtained by subtracting the cost of the raw cotton in the cloth from the price of the cloth per pound.

<sup>9</sup> Senate Document 633, *op. cit.*, Vol. 10, Part 3, p. 39; Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 297-9; *Massachusetts Labor Bulletin*, *op. cit.*, March, 1905, pp. 66-67; Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. X, *History of Women in Trade Unions*, pp. 176-7.

<sup>10</sup> Howard, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-31, 34, 37; *Massachusetts Labor Bulletin*, *op. cit.*, May, 1906, pp. 192-6, July-August, 1907, p. 32.

<sup>11</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 184-93.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 184-93.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 184-93.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 193-7.

<sup>15</sup> John Bruce McPherson, *The Lawrence Strike of 1912*, The Rockwell and Churchill Press, Boston, 1912, p. 9, a reprint from the September, 1912, Bulletin of the National Association of Wool Manufacturers.

<sup>16</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-32; *History of Labor in the United States*, *op. cit.*, Vol. IV, Selig Perlman and Philip Taft, *Labor Movements*, pp. 266-73; Paul Frederick Brissenden, *The I.W.W., A Study of American Syndicalism*, Longmans, Green & Co., New York, 1919, pp. 282-93.

<sup>17</sup> Wolman, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-9.

<sup>18</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>19</sup> McMahon, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>20</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-100; *Textile Unionism and the South*, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>21</sup> *Textile Unionism and the South*, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>22</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 301-2; Page, *op. cit.*, p. 72; *The Industrial Revolution in the South*, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-2.

<sup>24</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>25</sup> Industrial Relations Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 2467-8.

<sup>26</sup> McPherson, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> Brissenden, *op. cit.*, pp. 134-5.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 366-7.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 268; Vincent St. John, *The I.W.W.—Its History, Structure and Methods*, I.W.W. Publishing Bureau, New Castle, Pa. (1911?), p. 22.

<sup>31</sup> Massachusetts, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor*, 1911, p. 103.

<sup>32</sup> Brissenden, *op. cit.*, p. 366-7.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 290.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 290.

<sup>35</sup> John S. Gams, *The Decline of the I.W.W.*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1932, pp. 229-32.

<sup>36</sup> Brissenden, *op. cit.*, pp. 358-63.

<sup>37</sup> Gams, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

<sup>38</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 216-32.



THE PERIOD which runs from the years of the First World War to the beginning of the depression of 1929 saw the cotton mill unions ride the crest of the wartime union boom. Both the U.T.W. and the N.A.T.O. increased their memberships tremendously and a new left-wing rival to both these organizations sprang up in the form of the Amalgamated Textile Workers. The U.T.W. returned to the South and built up an unprecedented membership in this area, only to see the whole structure topple after the disastrous Southern strike in 1921. In New England the decline was not so rapid and came a bit later—after the 1922 strike in this region. The mid-twenties saw another attempt to unite all unions in the field into the Federated Textile Unions of America. Meanwhile, the U.T.W. gained by several defections from the N.A.T.O., which was renamed the American Federation of Textile Operatives in 1920—the most notable cases being the switch to the U.T.W. of the large Salem local in 1925 and the transfer of the New Bedford locals during the 1928 New Bedford strike. It was during this strike, also, that the Communists entered the field of cotton mill unionism through its Textile Mill Committee which led in turn to the formation of the National Textile Workers Union.

The wartime expansion of union membership affected all the cotton mill unions except the Mule Spinners'. For a while the N.A.T.O. kept close behind the U.T.W. The N.A.T.O., in 1917, had a membership of over 10,000 in Fall River and New Bedford alone.<sup>1</sup> In 1920 the N.A.T.O. changed its name to the American Federation of Textile Operatives to avoid confusion with the newly organized Amalgamated Textile Workers.<sup>2</sup> This new name, it will be recalled, is the same as that used by the old federation of craft unions which existed just before the formation of the U.T.W. By 1920 the A.F.T.O. claimed 25,000 members.<sup>3</sup> With over 15,000 of these in Massachusetts,<sup>4</sup> the total membership in cotton mills must have been about 20,000. The A.F.T.O., however, did not operate in the South, so with the aid of

its growing Southern membership the U.T.W. soon became by far the leading union among cotton mill workers. The U.T.W. membership of some 11,000 in cotton mills in 1914, rose to over 80,000 in 1920.<sup>5</sup> By 1920 over one-quarter of the U.T.W. cotton mill membership was in Southern cotton mills.<sup>6</sup> Actually the U.T.W. garnered 40,000-50,000 members in the South alone in 1919 and 1920, but the membership shifted rapidly under the influence of strikes and organizing activity.<sup>7</sup> The impact of the Southern membership on the structure of the U.T.W. is indicated by the fact that, whereas up to 1911 over 85 per cent of the U.T.W. locals were organized on a craft basis, by 1920 more than half the locals were on an industrial or plant basis.<sup>8</sup> For with no tradition of craft organization such as that which existed in New England, the Southern workers set up their unions without regard to craft lines.

The big 1914 strike in Atlanta had given the U.T.W. valuable publicity in the South and after 1915 the union profited from the war-time expansion of industrial activity to form locals rapidly and demand better wages. The feature of the U.T.W. activity in the South, in the war period, was its intense localization. Though about forty locals were formed up to 1918, there was no indication of any coherent plan for organizing the South as a whole. The union concentrated on the immediate demands and on the immediate conflict, and since wages were rising anyway and there was a shortage of labor, there was no concerted opposition from the employers and the union grew in the South as never before.<sup>9</sup> Actually, the U.T.W. advance in the South was a slow process until the last year of the war when a major conflict in Columbus, Ga., set off a rash of strikes and organization which swept the cotton mills of the area. In early 1918 a U.T.W. organizer came to Columbus and took over the direction of a conflict involving all the mills of the city, which was being led by the Georgia Federation of Labor. The mills had always operated under both verbal and written yellow-dog contracts and it was understood by all that union affiliation meant automatic dismissal. When the workers joined the union their audacity was met by a lockout. Federal mediation failed to settle the lockout and the workers were instructed to return to work by denying their union membership. Peace reigned for the moment, but when one of the mills discharged 25 union members and the union countered with a demand for recognition and a union contract, a strike resulted and the union succeeded in closing the mill by mass picketing. Gunfire near the mill brought deputies to the scene, but the strikers handled them roughly so that they were succeeded

by federal troops, companies of the Home Guard, and a proclamation of martial law. To evade the restrictions of martial law, the union held its meetings in Alabama, just across the Chattahoochee River. The intervention of National War Labor Board representatives led to a settlement which included a promise of readjustment of the bonus system, the right of the workers to report grievances through shop committees, and the reinstatement of the employees whose discharge had led to the strike. The union committees then succeeded in having most of the bonus payment changed to a straight wage, and later in the year reported having secured a piece-rate increase in one mill. The agitation resulting from the conflict at this mill brought some 4,500 cotton mill workers in the city into the U.T.W.<sup>10</sup>

The Columbus affair was the opening gun in a wave of disputes that swept the South in 1919, subsided in 1920, and finally collapsed in the unsuccessful struggle against wage cuts in 1921. The 1919 protest centered in the workers' demands for shorter hours, union recognition, and the transfer of wartime bonuses to straight wages. In its November, 1918, convention, the U.T.W. had set under way a campaign for the 8-hour day in the New England mills and named February 3, 1919, as the day on which the workers were to start the new schedule. As this day approached spontaneous strikes broke out in several Southern localities. Once again in 1919 Columbus provided a focal point for the struggle. Some 7,000 workers walked out. With only one-third of the strikers eligible for fixed strike benefits under U.T.W. rules, the commissary system of relief was adopted. Disorder was common on both sides and the union had to withdraw its picket lines in return for the nonprosecution of some strikers who had "cut up" a scab. When the mills saw the union was on the losing end of the battle, they made a slight concession on hours which brought temporary peace. Not long after, in May, the U.T.W. called another strike in Columbus for wage increases. One union man was killed and several others were wounded. Another slight concession, this time on wages, ended the strike. In the Horse Creek Valley area of South Carolina the demand for shorter hours was met by lockouts and evictions. The mills offered 55 hours in place of the 48-hour week demanded by the strikers and the union was finally forced to accept this and forgo its request for recognition. A four-month strike in Charlotte, N.C., brought some hour reductions and wage adjustments, but again the union failed to secure recognition. The 1919 battle continued with a violent strike in Macon, Ga., in which the mills resorted to the use of Negro strikebreakers and one Negro woman was killed.

Several other strikes of varying importance took place in the South in this year, but all of the 1919 strikes had a common pattern. The cotton mill workers were impatient for action to bring them union recognition, shorter hours, and higher wages. To hold the allegiance of the workers, even for a short time, the usually cautious U.T.W. leaders had to accede to the demands for strike action. The mills countered with lockouts and evictions, and attempts to reopen the mills led to violence on both sides. The usual result was a compromise on wages and hours, but absolute refusal of recognition. Since hour and wage improvements were more concrete to the workers than recognition, the strikes ended with this compromise. The union gained thousands of members, but not for long.

During 1920 the Southern strike fever subsided and in the interval of peace the U.T.W. rapidly lost membership in this area. The U.T.W., at this time, was devoting its major attention to combating the wage reductions and open-shop drive that was sweeping New England. With wage cuts in the South much more drastic than those of the New England mills, the U.T.W. was forced to take some action in the South if only to bulwark its New England fight. The union treasury was in no position to guarantee strike benefits and only on the basis of the locals' waiver of the right to benefits could Southern action proceed. The U.T.W. promised to send the South whatever money it could collect and, as it turned out, this was not much. The Southern strike was finally called on June 1, 1921, and Vice-President McMahon of the U.T.W. went south to take charge. The strike was the largest and most bitterly fought in the Southern cotton mills up to that time. Some 9,000 workers in nine towns responded. Aid to the area from outside was small and relief was furnished through commissaries. The U.T.W. sent down a few thousand dollars, but by the end of August, with relief funds exhausted and depression blanketing the industry, the strike ended as a total loss. From this time until early in 1929 the U.T.W. practically disappeared from the South.<sup>11</sup>

Besides the U.T.W. in the South and the A.F.T.O. and the U.T.W. in New England, there were still other organizations working to gain the allegiance of the cotton mill workers in the period just after the end of the First World War. The Mule Spinners' had left the U.T.W. in 1915 but managed to keep its A.F. of L. affiliation until 1919 when the parent body revoked the charter after attempts to reconcile the Mule Spinners' and the U.T.W. had failed.<sup>12</sup> In 1920 the claimed membership of the Mule Spinners' was 2,000.<sup>13</sup>

The I.W.W. was practically extinct among cotton mill workers by

1920, but a new union had appeared to make its appeal to the immigrant and unskilled. The Amalgamated Textile Workers was formed in 1919 and brought together groups previously unconnected with the U.T.W. and some from within the U.T.W. who were dissatisfied with U.T.W. policies.<sup>14</sup> Primarily, the A.T.W. sought to organize the unskilled and foreign-born, represented a protest against the arbitrary use of central control by the U.T.W. officials, resented the draining of local treasuries by the further increase of the U.T.W. per capita tax to 35 cents a month in 1919, and charged the U.T.W. officials with undemocratic procedure in handling grievances and with general timidity.<sup>15</sup> During the flood tide of strikes in 1919 many small independent unions had sprung up, and it was these independents which combined with some dissident U.T.W. locals from Lawrence to form the A.T.W. under the aegis of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers which was then campaigning for the 8-hour day in all fields.<sup>16</sup> For a short time the A.T.W. enjoyed remarkable success, enrolling 40,000-50,000 members by 1920 in the Northern textile industry as a whole,<sup>17</sup> but its strength lay mainly in silk and woollens.<sup>18</sup> At its peak in 1920 the A.T.W. probably counted no more than 10,000 in its ranks who were cotton mill workers, and from this point it rapidly declined.

The year 1920 marked the high point of cotton mill unionism. With over 80,000 in the U.T.W., 20,000 in the A.F.T.O., 2,000 in the Mule Spinners', and about 10,000 in the A.T.W., the total union strength reached over 110,000. There were approximately 420,000 workers in cotton manufacturing at this time, so that the proportion organized came to more than one-quarter of the eligibles compared to less than 5 per cent organized in 1901 when the U.T.W. was first formed. But the heights were soon lost. Cotton mill unionism was a "war baby" resting upon the insecure foundations of a war-oriented economy, with its labor shortage and easy profits. The onslaught of the postwar depression and the return to "normalcy" soon took their toll.

The U.T.W. upsurge in the Southern cotton mill area started to slow down early in 1920, in spite of the fact that in this year the U.T.W. reported its highest membership up to that time. Only 30 new locals were formed in the Southern area in the year after September, 1919, and when the 1921 depression came the union was concentrated mainly in a belt of mills in the North Carolina Piedmont region.<sup>19</sup> Successive wage cuts led to the bitter strike of 1921 and at the end of the struggle the U.T.W. was practically wiped out of the South. With mills shut down or working short-time, there was no

response to the attempt to reorganize a few months after the strike and by the end of the year hardly a single substantial local remained in the South.<sup>20</sup>

In New England the story was somewhat the same, but here the big strike came one year later than in the South, and in New England there was a nucleus of union-minded workers in the cotton mills who remained loyal to the unions. To help keep organization constantly before the workers, still another union moved into the New England textile field. To the U.T.W., A.F.T.O., A.T.W., and some scatterings of I.W.W. organization was now added the One Big Union. The short-lived O.B.U. moved down from Canada, where it was founded in 1919 and had done some organizing in Canadian mills. The O.B.U. was similar to the I.W.W. in its philosophy and tactics but the O.B.U. organized on a geographic rather than an industrial basis. The O.B.U. started its New England organization in 1921 in Lawrence, but secured very few members among cotton mill workers except in this city where it exercised a controlling influence during the 1922 New England strike.<sup>21</sup>

The New England cotton mills had cut wages 22½ per cent in January, 1921, and the National Cotton Manufacturers' Association (a New England group) at its meeting on January 4, 1922, issued a statement that for the present no further wage cuts were contemplated but that "Those mills which could conveniently cut wages would have the full moral and financial backing of the Manufacturers' Association."<sup>22</sup> As it turned out, many mills found it convenient not only to cut wages but to increase hours as well. On January 19, 1922, the mills of the Pawtucket Valley area of Rhode Island announced a further wage cut of 20 per cent and an increase in hours from 48 weekly to 54 weekly. The 28 locals of the U.T.W. Rhode Island Textile Council immediately voted to resist and the A.T.W. pledged its co-operation. On January 23rd a spontaneous walkout in a Pawtucket Valley mill rapidly spread to 14 other mills in the section, aided in its course by a system of roving battalions of pickets who descended on any mill which tried to operate. There were clashes with the local police forces and the state militia moved in. The A.T.W. controlled the Pawtucket Valley situation and Fitchburg, Mass., while the U.T.W. led in the Blackstone Valley area of Rhode Island. With both the U.T.W. and the A.T.W. standing firm in Rhode Island for the revocation of the wage cut and a promise of no discrimination, the mediation efforts of the State Labor Commissioner failed.

Meanwhile the wage cutting and lengthening of hours spread to other areas while the workers prepared for the struggle. In Massachusetts the 48-hour law confined the strikes to the wage issue alone, but in the other states both hours and wages were involved. In Manchester a strike vote showed 12,032 for the action and only 118 opposed. The strike spread rapidly throughout New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. The U.T.W. controlled in Manchester, New Hampshire, Lowell, Massachusetts, the Blackstone Valley, and shared influence with the predominant O.B.U. in Lawrence. The Pawtucket Valley was in the hands of the A.T.W., and the Mule Spinners' and the A.F.T.O. ruled in Fall River and New Bedford. The strikers throughout New England showed remarkable solidarity in the face of numerous evictions, injunctions, and local police curbs. It was a bitter fight on both sides and violence became more and more common as the months passed. Perhaps half of the Rhode Island strikers and one-quarter of the Massachusetts and New Hampshire strikers were actual union members, but the nonunion workers readily followed the lead of the unions. The employers were determined to break the unions' strength and rejected the mediation proffered by state authorities. It was not until August that settlement conferences between the mills and the strikers' representatives began, and by the middle of that month about half of the strikers had already drifted back to work. On August 23rd one of the largest mills involved agreed with the U.T.W. to revoke the 20 per cent wage cut and other mills rapidly followed suit. The net result was the revocation of the cut and the retention of the 48-hour week in Rhode Island, and simply the restoration of the old wage level in Massachusetts where the 48-hour week was a matter of law. In New Hampshire the wage cut was defeated, but the workers went back under a 50-hour weekly schedule in some mills and under a 54-hour week in others. Estimates of the number of workers involved in the strike ranged from 65,000<sup>23</sup> to over 125,000,<sup>24</sup> but not all of the strikers were from cotton mills. The largest single group, however, was cotton mill workers. This was the largest conflict in New England up to that time. The unions had won the battle, but it was an exhausting struggle and turned out to be a Pyrrhic victory.<sup>25</sup>

Between postwar depression and the resultant strikes against wage cuts, the cotton mill unions rapidly fell from the 1920 heights. The U.T.W. membership in cotton mills, which had risen to more than 80,000 in 1920, fell in 1921 to 21,000, and in 1922 to 15,600.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, the U.T.W. membership which remained was almost entirely in the

New England mill section<sup>27</sup> which was soon to start its decline, while the totally unorganized South continued to grow. The other cotton mill unions in New England suffered similar reverses. The A.T.W. practically disappeared after a temporary spurt during the 1922 strike,<sup>28</sup> and the last A.T.W. convention was held in 1923.<sup>29</sup> The O.B.U. followed the same downward path, lingering on in Lawrence after the 1922 strike and briefly reviving during the 1924 strike at Dover,<sup>30</sup> after which the remnants of the I.W.W. and the O.B.U. combined in Lawrence in 1924 and soon passed out of existence.<sup>31</sup> Of the independent unions, only the A.F.T.O. survived, though its membership declined. In 1920 the A.F.T.O. cotton mill membership was 20,000, of which 15,000 was in Massachusetts. By 1922 there were less than 15,000 members in the A.F.T.O.,<sup>32</sup> nearly all of whom were in Massachusetts<sup>33</sup> where Fall River and New Bedford continued to be the strongholds of A.F.T.O. activity.

When textile unionism began its collapse during 1920 the A.T.W. set in motion the last of the many attempts to unify all the unions in the field. In early 1921 the A.T.W. conferred with the A.F.T.O. and it was decided to set up a federation of textile unions in which each of the constituent unions would retain its identity and operate with a maximum of autonomy. By August, 1921, a plan was drawn up for the Federated Textile Unions of America. The F.T.U.A. really consisted of nothing more than a General Executive Board with representatives of each member union. The function of the General Executive Board was to collect a small per capita tax and make assessments for strike aid when the strike was approved by the board.<sup>34</sup> The F.T.U.A. was active in the 1922 New England strike,<sup>35</sup> but seems to have undertaken few functions aside from the administration of the provision for mutual strike aid. The first convention of the F.T.U.A. met in August, 1922. Most of the independent unions in the textile field were represented at this convention, but only the A.F.T.O., the A.T.W., the Mule Spinners', and the National Loomfixers Association had any membership among cotton mill workers. The rest of the independents were mainly from specialty branches of the textile industry.

Even before the first F.T.U.A. convention met, however, the A.T.W. began to cool toward its creation because of rumors that the A.F.T.O. and the Mule Spinners' were conferring with the U.T.W. During the rest of 1922 and 1923 the F.T.U.A. tried unsuccessfully to secure the affiliation of the U.T.W. As usual, the questions of per capita tax and autonomy provided the obstacles, though personal



frictions and vested interests also were involved.<sup>36</sup> In 1923 the A.T.W. went out of existence and soon two of the other independents left the F.T.U.A. which led a desultory existence up to 1926. In this year the A.F.T.O. withdrew,<sup>37</sup> and though the F.T.U.A. lingered on until at least 1931 and tried to win back the A.F.T.O.,<sup>38</sup> there is no evidence that the F.T.U.A. had more than a paper existence after 1926.

While the F.T.U.A. was making its futile efforts to secure the affiliation of the U.T.W. and unify the textile unions, the relations between the U.T.W. and the A.F.T.O., the two largest organizations of cotton mill workers, were undergoing a change. Both the U.T.W. and the A.F.T.O. were losing members and were in no mood to contemplate with tolerance any infringements on what they considered their territory. Since both unions claimed jurisdiction over all cotton mill workers (as well as other textile workers), there was practically no limit to the possible points of conflict. In 1924 the A.F.T.O. secured some new cotton mill membership when the National Loomfixers Association voted to bring its nine locals into the A.F.T.O. The Loomfixers Association was composed of local unions which had never entered the U.T.W. and those which had left the U.T.W. during the series of secessions just before the First World War. When it joined the A.F.T.O. the Loomfixers brought in some 400-500 members.<sup>39</sup> But this acquisition did not help the A.F.T.O. much in its losing battle with the U.T.W. Between 1923 and 1925 several A.F.T.O. locals went over to the U.T.W. and others showed signs of restiveness. The first big move came in 1925 when the U.T.W. succeeded in capturing the large A.F.T.O. membership in Salem, Mass. The Salem situation was unique in the A.F.T.O. in that the bulk of the members here were organized along industrial or plant lines, contrary to the usual A.F.T.O. practice. The locals were first started in 1918 with a membership of 800, and grew rapidly to a total of 2,000. In 1925 both the industrial locals and the craft locals of the A.F.T.O. in this city joined the U.T.W.<sup>40</sup> In 1927 the A.F.T.O. suffered another loss when the loomfixers' local of the Pepperell plant in Biddeford, Maine, shifted allegiance to the U.T.W.,<sup>41</sup> but the biggest blow came in 1928. In that year the New Bedford craft locals of the A.F.T.O. became involved in a bitter strike. The New Bedford locals needed more financial support than the A.F.T.O. was able to give. Only by affiliation with an A.F. of L. union could the strikers secure the necessary aid.<sup>42</sup> U.T.W. membership in cotton mills at the time was small and the A.F.T.O. had hitherto kept the U.T.W. out of the important cotton mill centers of Fall River and New Bedford.

The U.T.W. was more than ready to welcome any new membership, so in spite of their dire need the New Bedford A.F.T.O. locals drove a good bargain. The New Bedford locals entered the U.T.W. and thus were enabled to tap the general labor movement for financial aid in the strike, while the U.T.W. could record the new membership. The advantage in the exchange went to the New Bedford group, however, for they turned over the shadow of affiliation to the U.T.W. and kept the substance of control over their own affairs. The agreement by which the New Bedford Textile Council and its eight constituent locals entered the U.T.W. made the New Bedford group an autonomous unit within the U.T.W. subject only to the proviso of "consultation and advice" by the parent body, and the U.T.W. constitution was revised to allow for this special status accorded the New Bedford affiliate.<sup>43</sup> The A.F.T.O. took this blow calmly and relations between the New Bedford unions and their former colleagues remained cordial. The A.F.T.O. was well aware of the reasons behind the shift of the New Bedford locals and continued, during the 1928 New Bedford strike, to give whatever assistance they could afford.<sup>44</sup>

After the end of the 1922 strike in New England, relative peace descended upon the cotton mills of the area until the start of the New Bedford strike of 1928. This strike was important not only because it involved practically every cotton mill worker in this mill center for its six-month duration, but because it marked the return of the A.F.T.O. locals of this city to the U.T.W. It was also one of the centers of Communist activity in textiles and led in the formation of the National Textile Workers Union.

The strike began on April 16, 1928, with the announcement by the New Bedford Textile Manufacturers of a 10 per cent wage cut. Some 5,000-6,000 of the workers were members of the A.F.T.O. and their walkout was followed immediately by that of the unorganized workers, making a total of 27,000 who were out on strike. Shortly thereafter, in order to gain the support of the general labor movement, the A.F.T.O. locals went over to the U.T.W. As soon as the strike started, organizers assigned by the Communist Party started to set up the Textile Mills Committee patterned after the lines of the Passaic United Front Committee which had functioned during a strike in that city. The T.M.C. later became the New Bedford Textile Workers Union, which in turn became a local of the National Textile Workers Union when it was formed by the Communists in the fall of 1928. The T.M.C. addressed itself to the large mass of the unorganized workers and was especially successful among the Portuguese,

many of whom had a syndicalist background. The T.M.C. made use of mass meetings to enroll strikers into their ranks and succeeded in signing up some 6,000 of them. The rest of the strikers remained under U.T.W. control.

The sole U.T.W. demand was the revocation of the 10 per cent wage cut, but the T.M.C. demanded a 20 per cent increase, equal pay for equal work, a 40-hour week, and no speed-up. The strike started peacefully enough and essentially had the backing of the entire community except the mill officials. As ever, relief was a big problem, for with the whole city dependent upon the operation of the mills the strikers had to look outside for aid. It was the unskilled and lowest-paid to whom the pinch of want and the temptation to return to work would come first and it was among these that the T.M.C. did its best work. The T.M.C. organized the activities of this group from top to bottom—including the children—and their mass picketing, mass singing on the picket line, frequent mass meetings, and soup kitchens kept these workers out in a dramatic demonstration of solidarity which contrasted sharply with the conservative tactics of the U.T.W. An attempt by the mills to reopen early in July met with no response from the strikers. Gradually the peaceful nature of the strike faded as tempers became frayed on both sides and the two organizations engaged in mutual recrimination.

When mass picketing was ruled illegal and the militia was brought in, arrests began to mount among the adherents of both unions, with the left-wing group bearing the brunt of official displeasure. The T.M.C. then started the familiar tactic of filling the city jail with pickets who refused bail in order to eat at the city's expense. In spite of this some of the pickets' friends insisted on bailing out part of the inmates. On a single day over 250 were jailed and altogether some 2,000 were arrested at one time or another during the strike. About 800 were convicted and were subsequently put on probation by the courts.

While the T.M.C. held out for its original list of demands, the U.T.W. officials were seeking ground for compromise on its single demand for the revocation of the 10 per cent cut. Though both wings of the strikers had lost most of the public sympathy with which they started the strike, the T.M.C. came in for the most virulent attacks. A Citizens' Mediation Committee in collaboration with the Massachusetts State Board of Conciliation and Arbitration proposed a compromise wage cut of 5 per cent, and the U.T.W. officials accepted subject to a vote by the strikers. Two ballots had to be taken before

the compromise was accepted. The first vote was against the compromise and the authenticity of the count of the second vote has been questioned by some observers. Left-wing leaders were arrested to keep them in jail while the second vote was being taken, and one observer alleges that the results were announced by the New Bedford paper a half hour before the voting ended.<sup>45</sup> Though the U.T.W. locals had 5,000-6,000 members when the strike started (and probably increased their membership during the strike), only 2,000 voted on the final ballot and the compromise was accepted by only a small margin. Thus, early in October the strike, which had started in April, came to an end with a 5 per cent wage cut instead of the original 10 per cent. The attempt of the T.M.C. to prolong the strike still further failed and operations were soon in full swing.<sup>46</sup> Both unions remained on the scene, but soon both were to find their attention centered on the Southern arena.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of the Second Convention of the National Amalgamation of Textile Operatives*, 1917, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings of the Fifth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Textile Operatives*, 1920, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Dunn and Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

<sup>4</sup> Massachusetts, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor*, 1921, Part III, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 70.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>7</sup> *Textile Unionism and the South*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>8</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>9</sup> *Textile Unionism and the South*, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-40.

<sup>10</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 302-3; F. B. Gordon, *Mill Workers and the War*, an address delivered at the semiannual convention of the Southern Textile Association, Columbus, Ga., November 15, 1918, *passim*.

<sup>11</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 303-7; *Textile Unionism and the South*, *op. cit.*, pp. 180-2; Perlman and Taft, *op. cit.*, pp. 438, 603-4.

<sup>12</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 193-7.

<sup>13</sup> Wolman, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-9.

<sup>14</sup> Alice Henry, *Women and the Labor Movement*, George H. Doran Co., New York, 1923, p. 72.

<sup>15</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 83-91, 232-45; Dunn and Hardy, *op. cit.*, pp. 203-4.

<sup>16</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 232-45; *Textile Unionism and the South*, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-15; Dunn and Hardy, *op. cit.*, pp. 203-4.

<sup>17</sup> Wolman, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-9; Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 232-45; Elsie Gluck, *Introduction to American Trade Unionism*, Affiliated Schools For Workers, Inc., New York, 1937, pp. 67-8.

<sup>18</sup> Henry, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>19</sup> *Textile Unionism and the South*, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15; Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 245-9.

<sup>22</sup> Perlman and Taft, *op. cit.*, p. 512, citing *Textile Worker* for September, 1922.

- <sup>23</sup> *Monthly Labor Review*, *op. cit.*, May, 1923, p. 13.
- <sup>24</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 307-11.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 307-11; Perlman and Taft, *op. cit.*, pp. 511-4; Dunn and Hardy, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-1; *Monthly Labor Review*, *op. cit.*, May, 1923, pp. 13-36; Amalgamated Textile Workers of America, *Textile Strikers Lay Their Case Before the Public*, issued by the general office of the A.T.W.A., New York (1922?), *passim*.
- <sup>26</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 70.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66-70.
- <sup>28</sup> *Textile Unionism and the South*, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
- <sup>29</sup> Dunn and Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 204.
- <sup>30</sup> Beal, *op. cit.*, p. 78ff.
- <sup>31</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 245-9.
- <sup>32</sup> *Textile Unionism and the South*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
- <sup>33</sup> Massachusetts, *Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor*, 1923, Part III, p. 7.
- <sup>34</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 250-3.
- <sup>35</sup> *Textile Unionism and the South*, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.
- <sup>36</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 250-3.
- <sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 250-3.
- <sup>38</sup> *Proceedings of the Sixteenth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Textile Operatives*, 1931, p. 14.
- <sup>39</sup> *Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Textile Operatives*, 1924, p. 9.
- <sup>40</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 184-93.
- <sup>41</sup> United Textile Workers of America, A.F. of L., *Proceedings*, 1928 (condensed version), p. 50.
- <sup>42</sup> Interviews of this author with William E. G. Batty and Abraham Binns of the New Bedford Textile Council, August 5-6, 1938.
- <sup>43</sup> United Textile Workers of America, A.F. of L., *Proceedings*, 1928 (condensed version), pp. 37, 89, 92, 94.
- <sup>44</sup> *Proceedings of the Fourteenth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Textile Operatives*, 1929, p. 6; Interview of this author with James Tansey and William Harwood of the A.F.T.O., August 8, 1938.
- <sup>45</sup> Dunn and Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 226.
- <sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 225-7; Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 265-9; Beal, *op. cit.*, p. 98 ff.

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*THE SOUTHERN OUTBURST OF  
1929-1931 AND THE GENERAL  
STRIKE OF 1934*

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SINCE THE debacle of 1921 there had been scarce a trace of unionism in the Southern cotton mills. Sporadic and spontaneous outbursts, however, gave a hint of what lay beneath the peaceful surface. The American Federation of Hosiery Workers, an autonomous unit of the U.T.W., started following migrating hosiery plants southward in the middle twenties. Capitalizing on the desire of the older coastal area unions to extend their organization into the Piedmont region which had always been a union frontier, the A.F.T.W. succeeded in enlisting their co-operation in the formation of the Piedmont Organizing Council. By October, 1928, delegates from the Southern state federations of labor met in Chattanooga to further these activities, and at the New Orleans convention of the American Federation of Labor in this year the Southern delegates met in caucus to this same end.<sup>1</sup> Prodded into rebellion by the stretch-out, however, the Southern cotton mill workers were in no mood to await patiently the approach of unionism to remedy their grievances. Starting early in 1929, a powder train of strikes flashed through an astonished South. Many of these were without unionism at all and were under purely local leadership whose main concern was the alleviation of the burden of the stretch-out. These were invariably short-lived, small affairs which brought the workers partial success. All of the large strikes, however, either started or came under union leadership and the right to belong to the union became an important issue in itself. Chronologically first was the strike at the German-owned rayon plant in Elizabethton, Tenn., where some 5,000 workers walked out. Next in order came the three cotton mill strikes with which we are concerned. The first occurred in Gastonia, N. C., under the auspices of the National Textile Workers Union, the second at Marion, N. C., under U.T.W. guidance, and the third and last, which ended the Southern battle for the time being, was at Danville, Va., with the U.T.W. at the helm.

In January, 1929, Fred Beal, a Communist party member and a leader of the left-wing forces in the 1928 New Bedford strike, came

to Gastonia to start undercover organizational work for the N.T.W.U. Within a few months he had built up a union nucleus of several hundred members among the force of over 2,000 workers at the Loray mill just outside of Gastonia proper. At this time the mill was owned by Rhode Island mill interests and in 1928 the stretch-out and wage cuts were applied. Conditions were bad in almost every way—hours were long, wages low, the housing and sanitation left much to be desired, and the company store system kept most of the workers in debt to the mill. The immediate cause of the strike was the discharge of a number of N.T.W.U. people in the first few days of April. Some 1,700-1,800 workers quickly responded to the N.T.W.U. strike call and presented demands for a \$20 minimum wage for all, the abolition of hank clocks, no speed-up, no piecework, a 5-day week and an 8-hour day, better working conditions, repairs and improvements in the mill houses and lower rents, and union recognition. The explosion startled the mill interests and the commercial element of Gastonia, and they determined to remove the Communist group and break the strike by any means at hand.

Within a few days after the start of the strike the mill secured the aid of the state militia, reopened the mill, and obtained sweeping injunctions which the strikers disregarded. The problem of strike relief immediately came to the fore. On April 17th a relief depot was established by the Workers International Relief and in the middle of May a tent colony was set up to care for the families which had been evicted by the company. The mill gathered an ample supply of strike-breakers to supplement the group which did not strike, and the relation of the strikers to those at work was unusual. The number of those on strike fluctuated widely, for with little in the way of resources, many strikers drifted back to work and then came out again when they had replenished their larders. As Beal wrote:

. . . the scab of today was the striker of tomorrow. This, and the fact that most of the workers were related to each other, established a unique attitude on the part of the strikers toward the scabs. Elsewhere the scab or strike-breaker is regarded by the workers as the most contemptible of creatures; in Gastonia the scab was considered merely as a potential striker. Those that worked on the day shift attended union meetings on the lot in the evening; night shift workers argued strike issues with the strikers in the daytime.

The situation called for a different type of strategy from that usually practiced in strikes. I began to organize the scabs in order to have periodic walkouts to support the regular strike. Sometimes this succeeded. More

often it failed because the plans would be betrayed to the bosses and at the crucial moment the mill doors would be locked, armed men would force the workers to remain at their machines, the militant scabs would be beaten up and fired. The rest would be cowed into submission. But not for long. Soon another attempt would be under way.<sup>2</sup>

Within a day or two after the strikers' relief depot was opened on April 17th, a mob of several hundred masked men descended upon the depot and union headquarters at night and made a shambles of the place without hindrance from the troops which were supposed to maintain "law and order." The only result was that ten strikers were arrested (and later released) for breaking up their own headquarters! The presence and activities of the troops led to numerous public protests, so that after the relief depot had been wrecked the governor withdrew the militia. Thereupon the mill organized its own "Committee of 100" to ensure the continuance of the reign of terror directed against the strikers. The strikers informed the governor that since the civil authorities would not protect them, they would defend themselves and they proceeded to place armed guards around the tent colony which had now become the center of union activity. But the efforts of the workers were no match for the ruthlessness of the mill and business interests of the area and the strikers were rapidly losing ground.

On the evening of June 7th Chief of Police Aderholt and several officers attempted to enter the tent colony; when the striker-guards demanded a search warrant an altercation ensued in the course of which Aderholt was shot dead and a striker and two policemen were wounded. This was the beginning of the end. About 100 strikers were arrested, eleven men and three women were held on charges of murder and eight were charged with assault. Little was left for the terrorists except to mop up whatever remnants of freedom had been inadvertently left to the strikers. On September 13th or 14th a group of strikers going in cars and trucks to a N.T.W.U. meeting were stopped by an armed mob and turned back. One of the trucks was forced off the road, a shot rang out, and Ella May Wiggins, twenty-nine years old and the mother of five children, fell dead. The strike was over.

On August 26th the trial in the Aderholt case had started, but it ended September 9th when one of the jurors became ill. On September 30th the second trial began. Nine of the defendants, mostly local people, had been released and seven were actually sent to trial. At



the end of three weeks all seven were found guilty after less than one hour of deliberation by the jury. At the trial it was established that Aderholt and two of his aides were far from sober, and that none of the raiders had any legitimate business at the colony. Every possible prejudice of the jury on communism, the ideas of the defendants on race, religion, and social and economic questions, was exploited by the prosecution. In the words of a conservative observer of Southern origin, "the accused never had a chance. The work of the alarmists who saw a Bolshevik lurking behind every bush, had been so well done that an impartial jury could not be found. The defendants were really tried for what they thought, not what they did."<sup>3</sup> The same grand jury which indicted strikers so readily in the Aderholt affair refused to indict at all in the murder of Ella May Wiggins, but public protest forced the governor to intervene and fourteen were sent to trial. They were promptly acquitted.

The Gastonia strike had lasted from the beginning of April to the middle of September, but by June it had already become a lost cause. The entire affair was dominated by the violence and terrorism of the mill interests and their followers. Only the main episodes of the battle have been noted above. Actually there was scarce an interlude of complete peace in the war against the strikers, and more than once the N.T.W.U. organizers were beaten up and run out of town. "Throughout the trials, convictions for violence on the part of the strikers were uniformly had, and in no case was anyone accused of injury to a striker found guilty."<sup>4</sup> Though the mill owners made much of their opposition to communism while they beat down the strikers, their actions throughout the history of the industry in the South, and at Marion and Danville in the same period of 1929-1931, demonstrated clearly that this was but a smoke screen for their antiunion animus.<sup>5</sup>

While the Gastonia battle was still raging, the spirit of revolt spread to Marion, N. C. Just outside this town there were two mill villages, one controlled by the Clinchfield Manufacturing Company and the other by the East Marion Manufacturing Company. Both of these villages were among the poorest in the South. Long hours, low pay, complete company control of housing, stores, schools, and churches prevailed. To add to the grievances of the workers on almost every score of living and working conditions, the East Marion company installed a stretch-out system which, due to a management mistake, caused the mill an immediate loss of some \$40,000. To make up for this error the mill decided to add 20 minutes to the long working day. The workers organized rapidly under the U.T.W. and by the

middle of June, 1929, felt strong enough to risk open meetings. The mill immediately retaliated with the discharge of 22 union members. In spite of the U.T.W. efforts to delay strike action, the workers walked out and closed the mill on July 11th. The mill secured a sweeping injunction against the strikers' activities and numerous arrests of strikers occurred on various pretexts. While the East Marion strike was continuing, the Clinchfield workers were getting restless in the face of provocative action by the mill owners. Toward the end of July the Clinchfield mill started to drop union members, and in the first week of August 100 union people were fired and the mill started a lockout in an attempt to break the union. This brought an official strike order from the U.T.W. and the mills of both companies were closed. On August 19th the governor, at the request of the mills, sent in two companies of the militia, which were withdrawn within a few days. On August 28th mass resistance to an attempt by the sheriff to remove the furniture of an evicted striker led to the arrest of almost 150 strikers, the indictment of four on charges of rebellion and inciting insurrection, and on September 1st the troops came in again and put an end to all the strikers' organized activities.

In the face of troops, evictions, arrests, and injunctions, and the ever present shortage of funds, the strikers' enthusiasm availed them little. A conference between the mill managements, the U.T.W., the North Carolina Federation of Labor, and interested outsiders led to a "gentlemen's agreement" which ended the strike on September 11th. Hours were to be reduced from the old 60-65 per week to 55 per week with a corresponding reduction in pay, there was to be no discrimination against active union people, union recognition was not accorded but a workers' committee was accepted as the bargaining agent, and several weeks later the workers were to vote on whether or not to continue the shorter work week and in turn the mills were to give consideration to a wage increase. The troops left and work was resumed.

The settlement, however, merely provided a brief interlude of peace. The mills refused to take back certain participants in the strike and the workers became restless. During the night of October 1st the night shift walked out and 70-80 workers remained at the mill gates to apprise the incoming day shift of the situation. When the day-shift workers appeared on the morning of October 2nd most of them joined the strike, but some wanted to enter the mill to work. The sheriff ordered a path cleared for them and when this was refused he fired a tear gas pistol. A melee ensued. When the smoke cleared

six strikers were dead and 15 to 20 were wounded. The majority of the dead and wounded had been shot in the back. It was reported that one deputy had been grazed by a bullet. Once again the state militia came to Marion. The sheriff, ten deputies, the superintendent of the East Marion company, and three of his employees were charged with murder. Thirty-two strikers were arrested and charged with rebellion and resisting an officer.

The strike gradually lost its effectiveness. The troops were withdrawn on November 11, 1929. Evictions of the active unionists continued and over 100 remained blacklisted and unemployed in Marion. As in Gastonia, the union people were convicted, while those charged with the murder of the strikers were acquitted on the grounds of self-defense against the unarmed pickets. The mill owners had accorded the orthodox U.T.W. a no more peaceful welcome than they had extended to the Communist N.T.W.U.<sup>6</sup>

The final effort of the U.T.W. to make a dent in the Southern antiunion front came in 1930 at Danville, Va. The Riverside and Dan River Cotton Mills, Inc., one of the largest units in the South, employed some 4,000 operatives and had a complete welfare system including a company union of the Leitch type which dated back to 1919. The 1929 convention of the A.F. of L., encouraged by the wave of unrest that was sweeping the South, decided to embark on a Southern organization campaign which would throw the strength of the whole labor movement behind a U.T.W. drive. The test of strength came at Danville. In January, 1930, the management put the proposal of a 10 per cent wage cut before the company union. The "Senate," or foremen's chamber, accepted but the "House of Representatives," of the workers, defeated the proposal. Nevertheless, the management made the cut effective. The workers sent to A.F. of L. President Green at Richmond for help and soon Francis Gorman of the U.T.W. and Matilda Lindsay of the Women's Trade Union League arrived on the scene. The A.F. of L. also sent its efficiency engineer to convince the mill of the advantages of unionism but the management refused to have anything to do with him.

Certain conditions which were not present in the previous strike situations in the South were favorable to a strong union at Danville. The company union had accustomed the workers to group action. An independent loomfixers' union had existed since the 1919 strike and, although forced into the company union, they had maintained their own organization outside the company union and had 88 members and some funds. It was this group which approached Green and was

the spearhead of the opposition to the cut. On February 9, 1930, U.T.W. Local 1685 was formed and the loomfixers dissolved their own organization and its leaders became officers of the new local. The union grew rapidly and within a few weeks practically all the workers had become members. The company immediately started its counterattack with the discharge of 200 active unionists. In an attempt to impress the mill officials with their unity and hoping to dissuade the mill from further discriminatory discharges, the union early in April held a parade of over 5,000 adherents through the streets of Danville. On several occasions President Green addressed the workers. Enthusiasm was running high, though the firings continued. By the end of August perhaps half the workers had been discharged or laid off and were living on funds provided by those who remained at work. It was rapidly becoming impossible for the union to avoid open conflict.

The U.T.W. hoped to the very last to avoid a strike. The depression had come, many mills were closed, and thousands of operatives were searching for work. In addition, the U.T.W. treasury was far from full, and the A.F. of L. had started its Southern campaign on the premise of unionism as the harbinger of industrial peace—and a strike seemed likely to upset the A.F. of L. applecart. The company, on the other hand, seemed determined to make no move to avoid a conflict. All advances from the union requesting abolition of the stretch-out and revocation of the 10 per cent wage cut were repulsed, and in August the company withdrew its entire welfare program. The U.T.W. convention, meeting early in September, authorized a strike. In the middle of September the Danville local voted overwhelmingly to strike and set September 29th as the starting date. Last-minute offers of mediation from state and federal conciliators were rejected by the mill and on September 29th the strike began.

The mill workers at Danville were not as isolated, socially or economically, from the rest of the population as was the case in most of the Southern mills. The leading mill official, for personal reasons, was not a popular figure in any circle. The union was allowed the use of the schools, city park, and even the K.K.K. hall for meetings, and the police were not hostile at first. On the first day of the strike the pickets peacefully persuaded all comers to stay out of the mill. On the following day the mill secured two drastic injunctions. When it was disclosed that the issuing judge was a mill shareholder, he promised not to sit on any more strike cases, but the injunctions remained. The mill refused a mediation offer of Governor Pollard,

and an N.T.W.U. attempt to edge into the situation was ended when the N.T.W.U. representative was fined and jailed for distributing libelous literature. On October 6th the mill began evictions, and the relief problem was becoming acute, with Gorman dividing his time between Danville and attempts to raise money in the North. The A.F. of L. calls for voluntary donations had little effect.

As the weeks rolled by, the mill officials became anxious to expand operations. Despite the court order, picketing continued and there were several explosions at the homes of strikebreakers. The attitude of the police, however, was changing. Under their pressure picketing became more and more restricted, and as a result the number of those going to work increased. By November 24th half of the places in the mill were filled, and on this day the mill whistles blew for the first time since the beginning of the strike. The union immediately resumed mass picketing and the governor sent in 1,000 of the militia. There appeared to be no actual need for the troops, but through utilization by the local newspapers of colored stories on the minor explosions for which there were no clues or arrests, an impression of violence was created. The troops dispersed all the pickets and burned their shelters. Public protest against the prohibition of picketing resulted in an allowance of six pickets for each gate, but no shelters or fires to warm the pickets were permitted, and the troops also interfered with peaceful persuasion. On December 7th a full-page advertisement in the *Danville Register* attacking the union provoked the strikers into a mass demonstration in front of the mill, which was broken up by tear gas and over 40 arrests. The strike was obviously failing and the mill refused all attempts at peaceful settlement.

As the strike wore on, numerous workers were in and out of jail, but none were convicted of any serious crime. The arrests were being used as a strikebreaking device. The state's attorney used the unexplained explosions to secure convictions of pickets for misdemeanor, though the explosions were totally unconnected with the picketing. The Danville papers also campaigned against the strike, and the city editor of one of them was fired when he naïvely assumed that he should print strike news even when it was favorable to the strikers. Relief funds were low and mill supervisors visited the strikers' homes to induce them to return to work. The state also played its part in lowering the morale of the strikers when General Waller reported on the increase in the number at work since the troops arrived and said that many more would return if they were not terrorized by the union. The mill served close to 50 eviction notices and

announced through the press that on Christmas Eve the furniture would be dumped in the streets. This led to a big protest and actually no evictions were made on Christmas Eve, but the announcement further lowered the strikers' morale. On December 29th the furniture of eight families was thrown into the road. The end was in sight.

On December 30th A.F. of L. President Green came to Danville and proposed that the strike be ended on the basis that all the strikers be allowed to return to work without discrimination, that the mill allow membership in the union, and that all disputes be referred to an arbitration committee of five consisting of two worker representatives, two management representatives, and either Admiral Byrd or ex-Governor Byrd. The mill made no reply and the strike dragged on. On January 28, 1931, Gorman met with the strike leaders and proposed that all who could should return to work and contribute \$1 a week to those who remained without work. On the next day the strikers voted to return on this basis, evidently believing that the union had received some assurance that there would be no discrimination and that there would be no difficulty in getting their jobs back. (By this time the local press was claiming that almost 3,500 were at work, while the union placed the figure at 2,000.) Gorman thereupon issued an incomprehensible statement to the effect that the strike was no longer necessary because the company was permitting union men to return to work without questions. The strike was officially ended. When the workers applied for their old jobs most of them were told they were no longer needed. The whole ending was hopelessly confused. The U.T.W. had not only lost the strike, but by its attempt to gloss over this inescapable fact had lost the respect of the workers as well. This episode closed the union invasion of the South.<sup>7</sup>

The last conflict with which we will deal is also the greatest from all angles. The general strike of 1934 was the largest single strike in the history of the country up to this time. At its peak, over 420,000 textile workers were out on strike, and more than this number left and re-entered the mills during the three-week affair. Though the strike was relatively brief, it was a monster demonstration of solidarity of the workers and during its course both the unions and the employers developed new tactics to meet the rapidly changing situations. Legal and illegal violence against the strikers reached new heights, and Governor Talmadge of Georgia had the dubious honor of first bringing the "concentration camp" technique of repression into the field of industrial conflict after the thugs and degenerates brought down by a New York agency for the Bibb Manufacturing Company

proved too much even for him.<sup>8</sup> Though the conflict started in cotton manufacturing, it quickly spread to other textiles. Since the unity of the story would be destroyed by an artificial separation of cotton mill action from the rest of textiles, the strike will be considered as a whole here, with special attention to the cotton mill areas wherever possible.

The disappointment of the cotton mill workers with the operations of the NRA code came to a head when on May 22, 1934, General Johnson approved an industry proposal for curtailment of operations to 30 hours per shift, at the same hourly wage rates, for 60 to 90 days. The U.T.W. protested, asked for a conference with the Code Authority, demanded that hourly wage rates be increased to offset the hour reduction, that wages of skilled and semiskilled workers be standardized, and that the machine loads be reduced. On May 30th the U.T.W. announced that a general strike in cotton mills would be called if the curtailment which was scheduled for June 4th went into effect. There followed a series of conferences between the union, employers, and Code Authority representatives which resulted in the cancellation of the strike threat on the following basis: (1) the right to strike for further demands was not to be prejudiced; (2) a cotton textile labor representative was to be appointed to the NRA Labor Advisory Board, the Cotton Textile Code Authority, and the Cotton Textile National Industrial Relations Board; (3) the NRA Division of Planning and Research was to study wage rates and differentials and productivity in cotton mills; and (4) labor representatives acknowledged the seasonal character of the industry and the need for reductions in output. This "settlement" actually gained the union nothing except a postponement of the issue. The rank and file of the union protested on all sides—their wages were too low for existence, the stretch-out was physically unbearable, and they were not being allowed to bargain as Section 7 (a) of the NIRA provided. As a result, the U.T.W. officers decided on July 18th to call a special convention to consider a general strike. Their action was hastened by the general strike of textile workers in Alabama, which began on that day. All but two of the forty-two U.T.W. locals in this state struck for a \$12 minimum for 30 hours, abolition of the stretch-out, reinstatement of workers fired for union activity, and recognition of the U.T.W. About 20,000 workers went out. When vigilantes abducted a U.T.W. organizer and drove him out of the state, union members escorted him back and he was not molested again. This strike continued throughout August until it was merged in the general strike, and the tenacity of these strikers

was a large factor in the decision of the U.T.W. to call a general strike.

On August 14th the special U.T.W. convention met in New York City. On the third day a resolution calling for a general strike in cotton textiles was authorized, and on the next day it was made mandatory on the officers to call the strike on or about September 1st. Strikes were also authorized, without specific dates being set, for the silk, woolen, and rayon branches of the industry. Immediately after the convention Francis Gorman was chosen chairman of the strike committee and plans rapidly drawn up. The A.F. of L. co-operated through the services of its organizers and state federations. The C.T.N.I.R.B. offered to mediate, but the union refused on the grounds that it was employer-dominated. The employer spokesman refused to meet National Labor Relations Board officials. On August 30th Gorman announced that the strike in cotton would be effective on midnight of Saturday, September 1st. On that day the silk and woolen fields also were called out. Since Monday was Labor Day the real stoppage would not come until Tuesday, September 4th. Gorman addressed the workers over a nation-wide broadcast. He explained the purpose of the strike and gave final instructions. Mass meetings were held in many places and enthusiasm ran high. With North Carolina mills not observing Labor Day, the strike started there on Monday, September 3rd. Over 65,000 operatives walked out in peace. Gastonia, the scene of guerrilla warfare in 1929, saw a parade of more than 5,000 workers without disorder. Most of the big mills in the state were crippled or seriously affected. The union organized "flying squadrons" of pickets in motorcades which set out from the organized centers and persuaded or forced the workers in other mills to quit work. The mills of South Carolina and Georgia were mostly unaffected on Monday, and in Alabama the mills had already been affected by the state-wide strike which had been called in July. In the North, Labor Day speeches and final plans dominated the scene.

By September 5th the strike was in full progress from North to South. The union set the number out at 450,000 but newspaper surveys put the number at 325,000, or over 50 per cent of the 625,000 workers who, so far, had been subject to the strike call. On that day the first violence of the strike occurred in the cotton mill town of Trion, Ga., where a strike sympathizer and a deputy sheriff were killed in a pitched battle in which more than twenty were wounded. Minor scuffles occurred at other Southern points and the National Guard first went into action at Spartanburg, S. C. New England was



at least 50 per cent closed and there was little violence. New Bedford was completely closed though mass picketing was forbidden. In Fall River the American Federation of Textile Operatives voted not to strike, but when the loomfixers walked out with the U.T.W. the city closed down 60 per cent. In New Hampshire the Amoskeag mills were closed and numerous smaller mills in that state and in Maine were affected. The strike was much more effective than the employers had expected. Also, on September 5th, the union presented its demands to the employers, and President Roosevelt appointed a mediation board. The board consisted of ex-Governor Winant of New Hampshire, Attorney Marion Smith of Atlanta, and Raymond V. Ingersoll, president of the Borough of Brooklyn, N. Y. The board was empowered to inquire into the problems of the employers and the complaints of the workers, to consider ways and means of meeting the complaints and problems, and to act as voluntary arbitrators if both parties requested it. From then on events came thick and fast.

On September 6th, the National Guard was called out at Marion and Concord, N. C. Six union pickets at Honea Path, S. C., and one at Greenville, S. C., were killed by deputies and 33 were wounded. On the following day the National Guard came to 24 North Carolina towns and the U.T.W. asked for federal troops to protect strikers. On September 8th Gorman asked the Winant Board to arbitrate the conflict with power to compel acceptance of its findings. The funeral of the Honea Path shooting victims was attended by 10,000 mourners and union ceremonies. On September 9th partial martial law was established in South Carolina, and 3,000 militiamen and thousands of special guards were called out. On September 10th riots took place in several New England towns and two strikers were shot and 20 wounded by deputies. The number of strikers in New England increased. In the face of armed troops the flying squadrons in North Carolina were called off. The union extended its arbitration offer 24 hours. On September 11th a mob stormed a Rhode Island mill and five workers were shot. Picketing was enjoined in Pawtucket, R. I., and the National Guard posted in Lewiston, Maine. The union withdrew its arbitration offer and the Winant Board extended its inquiry to cover woolen and silk. On September 12th four more strikers were shot in Rhode Island, and the state invoked the Riot Act. After a minor brush at Woonsocket, R. I., the union, employers, and state authorities laid down rules for peaceful picketing. The employers formed a "united front" against arbitration. In the South the union

dug in for a long fight and began soliciting funds. Some 14,000 troops and armed deputies were stationed in the Carolinas.

On September 13th renewed rioting in Woonsocket resulted in one striker's death and seven wounded and the city was placed under martial law. Governor Green's request to the Rhode Island legislature to ask for federal troops was refused, but secret mobilization of the troops at strategic points nevertheless began. The union pointed to the employers' refusal of arbitration as the cause of 12 deaths to date. The proposed strike of dyers in Paterson, N. J., was enjoined and 20,000 writs served individually. More companies of the militia were called out in Connecticut. On September 14th the Associated Press estimated that 401,132 out of a possible 752,665 workers were out. Violence increased in the South. Rhode Island citizens armed as vigilantes. On September 15th the Southern mills made plans to reopen and tension increased. Employers' plans for reopening in the South included the use of 10,000 National Guards and 15,000 armed guards. The union planned to resume mass picketing. On September 16th Southern mills reopened while strikers planned passive resistance and concentrated on relief problems. On September 17th "martial law" was declared in Georgia, flying squadrons were arrested, and outside strikebreakers deported. Union organizers throughout the strike areas were beaten and arrested, but mass picket lines were retained and few returned to work. In New England the mills remained closed and further recruits were gained. On September 18th more New England mills closed and the Associated Press reported 421,000 on strike—a gain of 20,000 in the last four days in spite of the drive to reopen. Governor Talmadge of Georgia interned pickets in concentration camps and held them for "court-martial" though investigation disclosed that martial law had not actually been declared and no charges were brought. On September 19th a striker succumbed to a bayonet wound and the death toll rose. Evictions from company houses began, but in Georgia the troops barred this. In the Carolinas vigilantes were organized to break the strike.

By September 20th the number of pickets in Georgia concentration camps reached 200. About 20,000 strikers returned to work in the previous week in the South, but some 150,000 were still out. Near Columbus, Ga., 30 strike leaders were arrested on suspicion by military authorities and 34 key union men were arrested by civil authorities for "planning trouble." These men were held incommunicado, and since the strike funds were in their names, the move was a heavy blow to the strike in Georgia. The reporters of *The New York Times*

headed these items under "the employers' offensive." The union said "force and hunger" were sending the people back. President Roosevelt received the Winant Board report.

On September 21st President Roosevelt approved the report and expressed the hope that all strikers would return to work and that the employers would take them back without discrimination. The head of the Silk Code Authority recommended compliance with this request but the cotton and woolen spokesmen would not commit themselves. North Carolina mill owners announced the end of the strike but union officials told the people to ignore all orders except those from union headquarters. Local union leaders in many sections pointed out that the employers had made no plans to meet and accept the President's suggestion, and that the union had nothing except the President's influence to rely upon if the strike was called off before specific agreement by the employers. On September 22nd the U.T.W. Executive Committee called off the strike on the President's terms and hailed the result as a great victory. The employers refused to commit themselves.

Thus ended the great general strike of 1934. The union had demonstrated to itself, the public, and the employers that, regardless of union membership figures, the majority of the workers were ready to follow the U.T.W. Though many strikers may have been intimidated by union tactics, the fact remains that the ranks held in the face of strong employer intimidation which was well-buttressed by local governmental action.

Looking back over the conduct of the strike and the settlement, certain items stand out—notably, the skill with which the U.T.W. handled the strike, contrasting sharply with its tactics in previous strikes, the effectiveness of the employers' offensive, and the character of the settlement.

The union succeeded in dramatizing the conflict by the "flying squadrons" and the "sealed orders." The use of mobile mass pickets was not new in conflicts in this industry, but never before was this device employed on such a wide scale. Indeed, the motorcade had been used repeatedly in the South to expel strike leaders and organizers. The speed with which the flying squadrons were set in motion, radiating out from the better organized centers to the less well-organized mills, made this device very effective until the troops were brought into the picture. Then the risk of casualties was so great that the squadrons were called off. The sealed orders were issued by the Washington headquarters and went simultaneously to all local unions.

Regardless of their contents (which have never been revealed), their issuance lent an air of military precision to the conduct of the strike which aided the strikers' morale. In the field of publicity the union achieved a great advance over its previous procedure. Every means of modern publicity was fully utilized, and the union secured a great newspaper spread with a minimum of misstatement. In the field of radio, the union secured twelve nation-wide broadcasts for which it had to pay on only two occasions.

For their part, though they fell behind the union in publicity, the employers more than made up for this by their utilization of legal and illegal violence. Though in a few localities the union lost control of its followers, the use of the National Guard, armed deputies, local law enforcement officers and armed strikebreakers, elsewhere went much beyond the mere preservation of "law and order." As is usually the case, armed deputies of dubious character were no deterrent to violence. Rather was the opposite true. The forces of "law and order" were so clearly linked to the employers that the situation was labeled as "the employers' offensive" by various newspapers. This offensive reached a new high in tactics in the concentration camps of Georgia and in the beating and arresting of union people "on suspicion" and for "planning trouble."

Finally we must consider the "settlement" which ended the strike—the settlement which the union hailed as "a great victory." The Winant Board report recognized that in most cases the workers' complaints were well-founded. But the recommendations of the board in most instances meant no more than the creation of other government boards to handle and study the problems. It is true that the establishment of the Textile Labor Relations Board seemed to point to a fairer consideration for labor than it had had in the past, but the actual operations of the board proved far from satisfactory and in many cases reverted to the former procedure so bitterly resented—that of referring complaints to employer-dominated Code Authorities. On other scores also, the reality was far different from the expectations voiced by the union's top leaders when the strike was ended. Previous experience with government boards should have made the union wary. Finally, the union belief that the employers would re-employ all strikers without discrimination in spite of the refusal of the employers to commit themselves or become a party in any way to the "settlement" seems naïve. And the thousands of cases of discrimination showed that the union had erred. Whether the union could have

done anything else but call off the strike is another matter. Certainly in the crucial South the strike was 'beginning to crumble.'<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps the greatest error of the union, however, was not in the acceptance of the inconclusive "settlement" but in the manner in which the acceptance was made. In reality the union hailed as "a great victory" what was really a strategic retreat which should have been frankly explained as such. Here, as in the Danville strike of 1930-31, the leaders underestimated the rank and file. In both cases the workers quickly perceived the true nature of the "victory" and in both cases their resentment rebounded to the detriment of the union and the officials who had led them. In many interviews of this author with Southern cotton mill workers in 1938 this resentment was clearly expressed. Actually, in the strike itself, the U.T.W. had done a remarkable job under trying conditions and with limited resources. That the employers proved stronger than the union was no new event in the history of labor conflict. Greater frankness with the workers would have provided a better basis for future organizational efforts.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER

<sup>1</sup> George Sinclair Mitchell, "Organization of Labor in the South," *The Annals*, January, 1931, p. 184.

<sup>2</sup> Beal, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-60.

<sup>3</sup> *The Southern Textile Situation*, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

<sup>4</sup> *Textile Unionism and the South*, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 70-73; Perlman and Taft, *op. cit.*, pp. 605-6; Dunn and Hardy, *op. cit.*, pp. 230-3; Tippet, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38, 76-98, 107-8; American Civil Liberties Union, *Justice—North Carolina Style*, American Civil Liberties Union, New York, May, 1930, p. 4-10.

<sup>6</sup> Perlman and Taft, *op. cit.*, pp. 607-8; Tippet, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-25, 33, 109-59; *Textile Unionism and the South*, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-78; *Justice—North Carolina Style*, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-14; Jessie Lloyd, *Gastonia*, Progressive Labor Library, No. 4, published by the National Executive Committee of the Conference for Progressive Labor Action, New York, 1930, pp. 5-8.

<sup>7</sup> Perlman and Taft, *op. cit.*, pp. 608-10; Tippet, *op. cit.*, pp. 210-68; Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 317-19.

<sup>8</sup> Edward Levinson, *I Break Strikes!*, Robert M. McBride & Company, New York, 1935, pp. 283-5.

<sup>9</sup> Except where otherwise specified, this account of the 1934 general strike is taken from Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 368-91.

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## 17 UNIONS FROM 1929 TO THE COMING OF THE C.I.O.

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THE DEPRESSION in the New England industry which started in the mid-twenties left the unions there in a weakened condition. Membership of the A.F.T.O. of 20,000 in 1920 dropped to less than 15,000 in 1922 and continued to decline. Though complete data are lacking, cotton mill membership of the A.F.T.O. was probably less than 10,000 in 1924<sup>1</sup> and by 1930 was under 5,000.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile the U.T.W. also was faring badly. Depression in New England took its toll from the U.T.W. as it did from the A.F.T.O. Membership in 1920 of more than 80,000 fell to 15,600 in 1922, and from 1923 to 1930, though complete data are lacking, dropped to about 12,000.<sup>3</sup> Were it not for the accession of the A.F.T.O. locals in Salem in 1925 and in New Bedford in 1928, the U.T.W. would have made an even poorer showing.

With the New England cotton mills wilting under Southern competition, the only chance for the U.T.W. to maintain or extend its membership lay in the South. But with its back to the wall in New England, the union evidently felt itself unable to undertake alone the task and expense of organizing the Southern mills. The loss of the 1921 Southern strike saw the U.T.W. virtually disappear from the region. In 1922-3 the union managed to reorganize about a dozen tiny locals of tried unionists in the Carolinas (having not more than 100 members altogether), revived the old Charlotte District Council as the Joint Council of the Textile Workers of the Carolinas, and was responsible for weak strikes in Charlotte in those years.<sup>4</sup> Preparation for a new attempt to organize the South was aided in no small measure by the American Federation of Full-Fashioned Hosiery Workers. The American Federation of Hosiery Workers (the name now used) was one of the prewar secessions from the U.T.W. which rejoined the U.T.W. in 1922 as an almost completely autonomous unit.<sup>5</sup> The A.F.H.W. was following the hosiery plants southward. In 1927 it supplied leadership and support for a spontaneous strike at a cotton mill in Henderson, N.C., and in the same year formed the Piedmont

Organizing Council which secured the co-operation of the state federations of labor and began to lay the educational barrage for unionism in Southern cotton mills. In 1928 a meeting of delegates from six Southern state federations of labor was held, and by the time the 1928 convention of the A.F. of L. met in New Orleans a plan had been drawn for a Southern organizing campaign. By the beginning of 1929 the A.F. of L. was committed to aiding the U.T.W. in the South.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile the U.T.W. philosophy, along with that of the A.F. of L., was undergoing a change with the official adoption of the idea of "union-management" co-operation. Such a policy was, of course, implicit in the U.T.W.'s conservative activities, but for a long time it had no definite form.<sup>7</sup> It was with this olive-branch philosophy that the A.F. of L. and the U.T.W. approached the problem of organizing the South. By this means it was hoped to overcome the hostility of the Southern mill owners and to profit at the expense of the militant Communist-led National Textile Workers Union.

The National Textile Workers Union was formed as a result of the shift of the Communist Party from a policy of "boring-from-within" existing unions to a policy of dual unionism. This shift grew out of the wholesale purges of radicals which the A.F. of L. unions started in the mid-twenties. The Communists had been active within the One Big Union<sup>8</sup> and had set up a United Front Committee during the 1926 strike at Passaic.<sup>9</sup> In 1928, on hearing that a wage cut was due in New Bedford, the Communist Party sent its representatives to organize resistance against the cut, which they claimed would be accepted by the New Bedford Textile Council unless the workers demanded an open count on the strike vote. The vote was in favor of striking and the formation of Textile Mill Committees by the Communists was started immediately<sup>10</sup> and found their greatest support among the unskilled and the foreign-born. The T.M.C. changed its name to the New Bedford Textile Workers Union and succeeded in maintaining locals in New Bedford after the end of the strike.<sup>11</sup> Before the termination of this strike, however, the New Bedford Textile Workers Union called a national convention of left-wing textile workers which, in September, 1928, set up the National Textile Workers Union. Over half the delegates at this first convention were from the cotton goods branch of the textile industry, and though none were from the South, the convention did not underestimate the importance of the Southern industry. As soon as the convention was adjourned the N.T.W.U. sent organizers into the South. Southern activity brought results almost

immediately in the Gastonia, N. C., strike of 1929, and by the middle of that year the N.T.W.U. claimed connections in over 90 Southern mills.<sup>12</sup>

When the Trade Union Unity League was organized by the Communist Party in 1929 the N.T.W.U. became its recognized affiliate in the textile field.<sup>13</sup> In its campaign in the South the N.T.W.U. made no concessions to Southern prejudice on race. Besides demanding union recognition, ending of the stretch-out, a 40-hour and 5-day week, equal pay for equal work, abolition of child labor, and a weekly minimum of \$20, the N.T.W.U. demanded also complete racial equality.<sup>14</sup> At a 1929 conference in Bessemer City, N. C., the union added to its program abolition of nightwork (especially for women) and a 6-hour day for those under 21.<sup>15</sup> The Communist Party looked upon Gastonia as only the beginning of what they hoped would be a mass organizing campaign. To them, Gastonia symbolized the coming-of-age of the Southern cotton mill worker, and the development of this submerged group into an integral part of the class-conscious proletariat carrying on the class struggle on all fronts.<sup>16</sup> Using Gastonia as a nucleus, efforts were made to spread the strike and extend the N.T.W.U. to other mills in the region, with but little success.<sup>17</sup> That a great many Southern cotton mill workers followed the N.T.W.U. leadership in spite of the radical tenets it espoused reflects the depth of their grievances, but the union had neither the funds nor the organization necessary to withstand the onslaught of the employers and it rapidly faded from the cotton mill scene. The N.T.W.U. claimed 4,000 members in 1929, but by the following year had dropped to less than half that number.<sup>18</sup> By 1933 the organization had revived somewhat, but it is doubtful if it undertook anything but sporadic strike activity in cotton mills. In 1935 the Communist Party abandoned its dual union policy and reverted to "boring-from-within." The T.U.U.L. went out of existence in March, 1935, and whatever membership it had went into the U.T.W.<sup>19</sup>

It was by contrast with the radical N.T.W.U. that the A.F. of L. and U.T.W. hoped to make themselves acceptable to the Southern mill owners and to organize the South. Said one A.F. of L. official:

People of North Carolina are realizing now the real constructive character of the American Federation of Labor and the United Textile Workers of America. These organizations were once falsely considered communistic and radical. The employer's only alternative to accepting the American Federation of Labor is to force their employees into radical revolt.<sup>20</sup>



But the U.T.W.-A.F. of L. sadly underestimated the opposition of the employers to any form of unionism. The offensive power which the mill owners put into play soon showed the U.T.W.-A.F. of L. that, far from being scared into accepting the U.T.W. under threat of a "Communist revolt," the Southern employers were confident of their ability to beat down both the U.T.W. and the N.T.W.U.<sup>21</sup>

With the stage set by the Piedmont Organizing Council, the A.F. of L. promise of help, and the U.T.W. union-management co-operation policy, the campaign got under way. The union was helped by the fact that the period was one of relative prosperity for the Southern mills, at the same time that the stretch-out had started an undercurrent of discontent which had extended to hours and wages as well as the work load.<sup>22</sup> Results were slow in coming at first, but soon the agitation broke forth in a tidal wave of strikes beginning in the spring of 1929 and continuing until early 1931. The U.T.W. asked for a 48-hour week, standardization of wages, end of the stretch-out, and no nightwork for women and children.<sup>23</sup> That the South was ripe for organizing was shown by the large number of strikes in which there was no union influence,<sup>24</sup> but only a spontaneous protest against oppressive working conditions.<sup>25</sup>

Right here the weakness of the U.T.W.-A.F. of L. campaign was exposed. The aid which the A.F. of L. promised the U.T.W. in early 1929 was not implemented by a definite plan of organization and attack, to say nothing of finances. It was evidently expected that the good-will speeches of A.F. of L. President Green and U.T.W. President McMahon would make such attention to details unnecessary.<sup>26</sup> At the 1929 convention of the A.F. of L., when most of the strikes were ended or about to end, the A.F. of L. agreed to co-ordinate 100 organizers who were to be supported by the craft unions of the A.F. of L. and would give their first attention to organizing the respective crafts in the South but would also be available to help the textile workers.<sup>27</sup> This really meant little more than that the U.T.W. was to get the leftovers of the campaigns of the other A.F. of L. unions in the South.<sup>28</sup> It is also true that the state federations in the South were a little fearful of a campaign which might upset the peaceful status quo.<sup>29</sup> With this haphazard approach it is little wonder that the U.T.W. lost practically every engagement, and when the Danville, Va., strike was finally ended in early 1931, the U.T.W. was more than beaten—it was thoroughly discredited in the eyes of the Southern cotton mill workers who had joined the union in thousands and left it with equal rapidity. The union did not approach the success it had

had in the South in 1919-20, and the many locals established during the 1929-30 campaign were practically wiped out.<sup>30</sup> Once again the U.T.W. had failed in the South.

Meanwhile the depression which began in 1929 started cotton mill unionism on the slide to new low figures in membership. The A.F.T.O., whose membership had dropped below 5,000 by 1930, probably went under 4,000 by the following year,<sup>31</sup> and it is difficult to estimate the A.F.T.O. membership in the subsequent years because no conventions were held from 1932 to 1936. The U.T.W. put on an organizing campaign in Fall River in 1934 which it claimed sent the total A.F.T.O. membership down to 2,000.<sup>32</sup> The U.T.W. cotton mill membership, which was about 12,000 from 1923 to 1930, reached a new low in 1933 when it probably had no more than 6,000-7,000 members in cotton mills.<sup>33</sup> With the Mule Spinners' Union moribund, and only about 10,000 cotton mill workers organized altogether at the beginning of 1933, cotton mill unionism just before the coming of the NRA was back where it had been when the U.T.W. was first organized more than 30 years earlier.

The NRA period saw the U.T.W. rise once more, this time to heights even greater than in 1919-20. Unfortunately, before this development got under way in 1933 the U.T.W. managed to lose most of the members in Salem which it had acquired from the A.F.T.O. in 1925. After a strike and a dispute between the local membership and U.T.W. officials over the policy of union-management co-operation, the U.T.W. industrial locals seceded to form the Independent Sheeting Workers Union, leaving only the loomfixers' local in the U.T.W.<sup>34</sup> Despite this local setback, U.T.W. membership grew by leaps and bounds under the general improvement in business conditions and the governmental promise of freedom to organize. By the middle of 1933 textile workers were flocking to the union. Whereas in 1933 the U.T.W. had paid its per capita tax to the A.F. of L. on the basis of a total membership of only 15,000 in all branches of the textile industry, by 1934 this figure was more than doubled, and in 1935 the per capita was paid on almost 80,000 textile union members.<sup>35</sup> Actually a much larger number than this was in the U.T.W. at one time or another during these years. Membership fluctuated so widely under the influence of strikes and changing conditions that one authority on labor union membership used the U.T.W. as an example of the difficulty of accurately determining union membership at any particular time.<sup>36</sup> On the eve of the great general textile strike in 1934, the union claimed some 350,000 members,<sup>37</sup> while in February, 1935,

the claim was raised to almost half a million, with an additional 100,000 "on the books." Allowing for a good deal of exaggeration, the response of over 400,000 workers to the U.T.W. strike call in 1934 does indicate a substantial following, and between 1932 and 1934 over 500 new locals were chartered while attendance at the district, state, regional, and departmental conventions ran high.<sup>38</sup> In 1934 the U.T.W. claimed some 300 locals in the South alone.<sup>39</sup> Just what proportion of the U.T.W. membership was in cotton mills is hard to determine. A union estimate indicates that at the time of the 1934 strike the U.T.W. represented 50 per cent of the cotton mill workers of the country.<sup>40</sup> This would have made the cotton mill membership almost 200,000 and is probably fairly close to the actual state of affairs before the post-strike decline.

The U.T.W., however, was in no position either financially or organizationally to hold these gains or consolidate its position in the face of employer opposition. The loose compromise which ended the 1934 strike perhaps saved the union from total defeat, but members began to leave when the implications of the settlement became clear. In 1935 the U.T.W. paid its per capita to the A.F. of L. for almost 80,000 members in all branches of the textile industry. This was much less than one would expect on the basis of the turnout in the 1934 strike, but it was the highest in many years. That the union was on the way to more solid progress was indicated by the rise to 100,000 in 1936.<sup>41</sup> At that time the U.T.W. had some 700 locals in 35 states,<sup>42</sup> was what perhaps was most important, the union had succeeded in maintaining itself in the South where about 300 locals, though small ones, continued to function.<sup>43</sup> No exact data are available for cotton mill membership separately from the general membership figures of the U.T.W., but in December, 1936, and January and February, 1937, the per capita payments received by the U.T.W. represented some 60,500 members of which one-half were in the hosiery and dyers federations.<sup>44</sup> This would leave less than 30,250 members in all other branches of the industry, with probably not over 20,000 in the cotton mills just before the T.W.O.C. (Textile Workers' Organizing Committee) was formed by the C.I.O.

By the end of 1936 the U.T.W. remained the dominant union in the cotton textile industry. In 1934, after a final attempt to bring the A.F.T.O. into the U.T.W. failed, the U.T.W. put on a campaign in the A.F.T.O. stronghold of Fall River which it claimed netted 8,000 members and further reduced the A.F.T.O. ranks.<sup>45</sup> In the South the U.T.W. never had any rivals except the N.T.W.U., and in 1935

the N.T.W.U. dissolved. There remained only two strong independents in New England, the Independent Sheetting Workers at Salem, Mass., and the Independent Textile Union at Woonsocket, R.I. The latter was founded in 1930 by a seceding U.T.W. local. It is unique in that it is not confined to textiles, but admits practically any workers in the area who wish to affiliate.<sup>46</sup> The Sheetting Workers' membership was 2,000-3,000,<sup>47</sup> and while no data are available for the cotton mill membership of the Woonsocket group, it was probably small in 1936.

In 1935 President McMahon of the U.T.W. was one of the founders of the Committee for Industrial Organization. In 1936 the U.T.W., along with other C.I.O. unions, was suspended by the A.F. of L. and in 1938 its charter was revoked.<sup>48</sup> The A.F. of L. then made a gesture toward the past by restoring the Mule Spinners' charter<sup>49</sup> which it had revoked almost twenty years before at the insistence of the U.T.W.—though whether the Mule Spinners' had any basis for a membership in cotton mills at all was a matter of doubt, for in 1938 mule spinning in cotton mills was practically extinct. In 1938 to 1941 the A.F. of L. convention proceedings noted that the per capita payments of the Mule Spinners' indicated a membership of 500.<sup>50</sup>

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Textile Operatives*, 1924, pp. 4-5.

<sup>2</sup> *Proceedings of the Fifteenth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Textile Operatives*, 1930, pp. 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> Wolman, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-9; Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-2.

<sup>4</sup> *Textile Unionism and the South*, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>5</sup> Wolman, *op. cit.*, pp. 194-5.

<sup>6</sup> *Textile Unionism and the South*, *op. cit.*, pp. 63-4.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>8</sup> Beal, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-8.

<sup>9</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 260-73.

<sup>10</sup> Beal, *op. cit.*, p. 98ff.

<sup>11</sup> Dunn and Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 206-8.

<sup>13</sup> Labor Research Association, *Labor Fact Book* [I], International Publishers, New York, 1931, pp. 135, 138.

<sup>14</sup> Page, *op. cit.*, pp. 74-5.

<sup>15</sup> Dunn and Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

<sup>16</sup> William F. Dunne, *Gastonia—Citadel of the Class Struggle in the New South*, published for the National Textile Workers Union by the Workers Library Publishers, New York, 1929, *passim*; Dunn and Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 110; Page, *op. cit.*, introduction.

<sup>17</sup> William Dunne on pp. 5-7.

<sup>18</sup> Dunn and Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 207.

<sup>19</sup> Wolman, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

<sup>19</sup> Labor Research Association, *Labor Fact Book III*, International Publishers, New York, 1936, p. 100.

<sup>20</sup> *Monthly Labor Review*, *op. cit.*, June, 1929, p. 165, citing the speech of T. A. Wilson, president of the North Carolina Federation of Labor, at the 1929 convention of the Women's Trade Union League.

<sup>21</sup> Tippet, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-9.

<sup>22</sup> *Textile Unionism and the South*, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

<sup>23</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 144-8.

<sup>24</sup> Couch, *op. cit.*, p. 629ff.

<sup>25</sup> *Hearings on S. Res. 49*, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-2.

<sup>26</sup> Edward Levinson, *Labor on the March*, Harper & Brothers, New York and London, 1938, p. 48.

<sup>27</sup> *Textile Unionism and the South*, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

<sup>28</sup> Couch, *op. cit.*, p. 629ff; Lewis L. Lorwin, *The American Federation of Labor*, The Brookings Institution, Washington, 1933, pp. 252-8.

<sup>29</sup> *Organization of Labor in the South*, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

<sup>30</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-8; *Textile Unionism and the South*, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

<sup>31</sup> *Proceedings of the Sixteenth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Textile Operatives*, 1931, pp. 3-4.

<sup>32</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 362-4.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72; Wolman, *op. cit.*, pp. 178-9.

<sup>34</sup> Nyman, *op. cit.*, pp. 168-9.

<sup>35</sup> *Report of the Proceedings of the Fifty-Eighth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor*, 1938, p. 76.

<sup>36</sup> Wolman, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-9.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>38</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 349-53.

<sup>39</sup> *Textile Notes*, *op. cit.*, April, 1934.

<sup>40</sup> *Abstracts of Speeches*, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>41</sup> *Report of the Proceedings of the Fifty-Eighth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor*, 1938, p. 76.

<sup>42</sup> *Hearings on H.R. 9072*, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>43</sup> *Textile Worker*, *op. cit.*, July 4, 1936, p. 8.

<sup>44</sup> Textile Workers Organizing Committee, *Building a Union of Textile Workers*, 1939, p. 8.

<sup>45</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 362-4.

<sup>46</sup> Interview of this author with J. Schmetz of the Independent Textile Union, August 2, 1938.

<sup>47</sup> Interview of this author with F. Levesque of the Independent Sheeting Workers Union, July 22, 1938.

<sup>48</sup> *Report of the Proceedings of the Fifty-Sixth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor*, 1936, p. 68; *Report of the Proceedings of the Fifty-Eighth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor*, 1938, pp. 72, 103.

<sup>49</sup> *Report of the Proceedings of the Fifty-Seventh Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor*, 1937, pp. 418, 518; *Report of the Proceedings of the Fifty-Eighth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor*, 1938, p. 71.

<sup>50</sup> *Report of the Proceedings of the Sixty-First Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor*, 1941, p. 47.

IN SPITE of a union history extending back before the Civil War and practically as old as factory mass production itself, only a very small fraction of the cotton mill employees were organized at any time, except in 1919-20, before the advent of the C.I.O. campaign in textiles. Why had unionism failed so signally in cotton manufacturing? Why, in spite of large-scale strikes in which the unorganized willingly followed the organized minority, were the unions unable to consolidate and hold the gains which they made in times of strife? Win or lose, the end of a strike was almost invariably the prelude to a loss of membership. If the strike was won the workers were likely to become complacent and indifferent to unionism; if the strike was lost they became hostile. A glance at the industry itself, its workers, and the character of the unions will help us understand the gyrations of unionism in cotton manufacturing. In doing this we shall have to say something about the other branches of the textile industry besides cotton manufacturing, for most of the unions which have operated in cotton mills have also tried their hand in silk, woolens and worsteds, etc. Especially is this so of the United Textile Workers, the principal union in textiles before the C.I.O., and around which most of our discussion will center.

Textile manufacturing itself is more than an industry—it is really a group of industries with widely different characteristics and problems. The only bond between them is that all are concerned with the fabrication of yarn or thread from natural or artificial fibers and the processing of this yarn into woven or knit goods for thousands of manufacturers in other trades who give the product its final form as clothing, upholstery, belting, curtains, garters, undergarments, hosiery, rugs and carpets, neckwear, hatbands, lace, tarpaulins for trucks and other industrial uses, sheets and shirts, tire fabrics, blankets, towels, and so forth down a list which could be almost indefinitely extended and which ranges from the lowly shoelace to the lifesaving

parachute and all points north, east, south, and west. In addition there is the dyeing and finishing branch of the industry, and these operations may be carried on separately or by units of a firm which also makes yarn or cloth. With an average of one million wage earners in modern times, a union like the United Textile Workers, which claimed jurisdiction over all textiles, had the task of fitting its structure and activities to the different organizational problems of the multifarious branches of its claimed territory.

The cotton goods section, with which we are concerned, is the largest single unit of the textile industry, but within cotton goods the variety of product and conditions is analogous to that in the textile industry as a whole. Cotton yarns are made in qualities ranging from the thick, loosely spun components of a floor mop to the gossamer filaments which make up curtains; from fine dress fabrics to sturdy sheeting to heavy canvas—all come under the head of cotton manufacturing. This multiplicity of products leads to great variations in the conditions under which the union must work, for where one branch of cotton manufacturing may be prosperous and dominated by a few large mills, another section at the same time may be depressed and fiercely competitive. Further complications are introduced by the New England-Southern division within the industry. Even if unionism was solidly established in New England, with a large proportion of the employees in its ranks, the extension of organization to a distant area whose chief competitive advantage lay in a jealously guarded lower wage scale would be an undertaking of the first order. With unionism weak in New England and unable to undertake the expensive job of a sustained campaign in the South, the competition from the totally unorganized area provided a constant brake on the unions which did exist in New England, and strengthened the hand of the New England mill owner in his dealings with the unions.

The diversity of the industry was matched by the heterogeneity of the working force. Not only were the workers divided by occupation and skill, but an identical occupation might be skilled or semiskilled according to the type and grade of goods made in different cotton mills. Partly coinciding with differences in skill were the differences in nativity, national origin, and cultural background. In New England, the more skilled groups at the beginning of the present century were mainly natives and those of British, Scotch, and Irish origin or descent, while the unskilled laboring class was dominated by the more recently arrived immigrants of southern and eastern Europe. The backbone of the New England unions before the First World War was formed

by these operatives of British, Scotch and Irish origins.<sup>1</sup> The conflict between the unskilled, who in times of industrial disputes frequently tried to move up the occupational ladder via the strikebreaking route, and the skilled, who looked on the lower living standards of the unskilled immigrant as a constant threat to working conditions, was fueled by the clash of different cultural backgrounds. To the divisions of skill and cultural differences with which unionism had to contend was added the obstacle of the large proportion of women and children in the industry. The Southern section of the industry did not have the immigrant—but it had the women and an even larger proportion of children than New England. In the South, the equivalent of the immigrant of New England was the agricultural tenant and farmer who came to the mills totally unacquainted with industrial life. The Southern mill worker entered industry with a standard of living based upon the poverty of tenant and credit farming. If the better livelihood which the mill represented proved unsatisfactory to the workers in any respect, the Southern mill owner had only to tap the vast reservoir of those who were still on the farms and a new crop of initiates was brought in. And lurking in the Southern background there still remained the Negro, who might welcome a chance to move up from the lowest laborer's work to which they were confined in the mill.

Keeping in mind the diversity of the textile industry as a whole, and of the cotton goods industry in particular, and the heterogeneity of the working force in the cotton mills, how did the unions in the industry meet the problems which these conditions imposed? Several of the unions which we have discussed above and which claimed jurisdiction over all textiles did not last long enough to come face to face with the problems of adjusting their organization to the task of organizing in cotton, woolen and worsted, silks, dyeing and finishing, etc., in the different sections of the country. Such was the case with the I.W.W., the O.B.U., the A.T.W., and the N.T.W.U. These were essentially fighting organizations, built around an immediate grievance or particular set of conditions, and none of them lasted more than a few years. Their usual life span covered a whirlwind organizing campaign, rising to the climax of the strike, and then dying out after a varying period of skeletal existence. While they existed they organized helter-skelter; where there was a grievance to be adjusted, there they appeared. They provided the industry with some spectacular strikes, and they gave the workers a liberal education in strike strategy and tactics, but they did not last long enough to meet the problems which a continuing organization in the industry had to face. The A.F.T.O.,



though a continuing organization with a claim to jurisdiction in all branches of textiles, avoided the problems which such a jurisdiction involved by the simple device of ignoring them and not attempting to organize outside the easy reach of its stronghold in the cotton mills of Fall River and New Bedford. This leaves only the U.T.W., which attempted to extend its organization to all branches of the industry and to all sections of the country.

When the U.T.W. was organized it was structurally a conglomeration of craft locals in various branches of the textile industry, with cotton manufacturing the most heavily represented. The U.T.W. officials set about consolidating the new organization by raising the per capita payments in order to put the centralized controls provided by the U.T.W. constitution on a sound financial basis. In the face of repeated secessions, the U.T.W. resisted the attempts of the various craft groups to transform the national union into little more than a loosely knit federation of national craft unions. As we have seen, a great many craft locals did leave the U.T.W. and they set up the A.F.T.O. in 1916 to carry out their ideas for an organization of craft locals with a great deal of autonomy and low per capita payments. While the plan to make the U.T.W. a federal association of national craft unions failed, the search continued for a more effective form of organization that would make allowances for the differences between the various sections of the industry, and still retain within the U.T.W. the powers of co-ordination and control necessary in an industry the boundaries of whose sections were difficult to fix and were frequently shifting. The American Federation of Hosiery Workers, which had left the U.T.W. before the First World War, came back in 1922 as an autonomous unit, but the U.T.W. did not follow up this admittance with any plan for further organization by departments or federations until some time later. Possibly this was because a series of federations with as much autonomy as the A.F.H.W. would have been little different in its effect on the U.T.W. from the idea of a federation of craft unions which the U.T.W. officials had fought against from the very start.

By 1930, when the U.T.W. had behind it a postwar decade of defeats and decline, while the A.F.H.W. seemed to be faring quite well in its separate path, the question of structure was reopened and the 1930 convention authorized the Constitution Committee to bring in a plan at the next convention for revising the U.T.W. constitution to provide for a new policy of organizing along the lines of separate federations for the different branches of the textile industry.<sup>2</sup> Before

the 1932 convention met, however, a strike of the silk workers in Paterson resulted in the formation of the American Federation of Silk Workers. At the 1932 convention, in September, the U.T.W. constitution was amended to provide for the organization of federations within the U.T.W. and the establishment of the American Federation of Silk Workers was legalized.<sup>3</sup> By 1934 federations had been formed for Rayon, Woolen and Worsteds, Narrow Fabrics, and Dyers,<sup>4</sup> but the relation of the federations to the U.T.W. was not clearly defined and some of the craft locals believed they had the right to form federations along craft lines.<sup>5</sup> The new U.T.W. constitution merely said that all locals in a field in which a federation was established must be members of the appropriate federation, that the per capita of these locals must be paid through the federation, which then passed it on to the national union, and that routine matters might be handled by the federation while important matters must be taken up by the federation with the national union. Attempts of federation officers in 1934 to get a more precise definition of the relation between the U.T.W. and the federations were unsuccessful, as was the attempt of the federations to have the per capita divided equally between the U.T.W. and the federations.<sup>6</sup> The federations had to be content with receiving back 5 cents of the 20 cents per capita which their locals paid.<sup>7</sup>

At the 1936 convention some progress was made in clarifying the new departmental or federation setup of the U.T.W. Any illusions of craft groups that they might form craft federations were dispelled when the convention adopted a list of branches of the textile industry within which federations might, at the discretion of the U.T.W. Executive Council, be formed.<sup>8</sup> The branches named were: hosiery; upholstery and plush; carpets and rugs; worsteds and woolens; cotton goods; knit goods; synthetic yarns; silk and rayon; lace; narrow fabrics; jute goods; and the dyeing, finishing, bleaching, and printing of textile products.<sup>9</sup> The per capita tax for all locals was doubled to 40 cents per member per month and the federations were to receive back whatever portion the Executive Council thought was necessary for their work.<sup>10</sup> The lines between the power of the national union officers and the new federations, however, remained vague,<sup>11</sup> especially in relation to the calling of strikes.<sup>12</sup> This may have been deliberate policy, in view of the fact that the new form of organization was still in an experimental phase.

Before the new system really got under way the Textile Workers Organizing Committee was formed by the U.T.W. and the C.I.O. in March, 1937,<sup>13</sup> and the picture changed completely. Of the federations

which had been set up since the 1932 U.T.W. convention authorized this form of organization, only the Dyers Federation was self-supporting while the rest had only skeleton organizations and depended on the national union to finance at least part of their activity.<sup>14</sup> (The Hosiery Federation is excluded from this discussion because it antedated the federation system set up in 1932. It was self-supporting.) In some fields, such as cotton goods, not even a skeleton federation existed when the T.W.O.C. moved in. But even the brief history of the federation system of the U.T.W. provides some material for speculation as to the potentialities of this attempt to cope with the diversity of the textile industry. While the federation system held the possibility of better organizational efforts within each branch of the industry, it also had definite and powerful centrifugal tendencies which might have led to the complete disruption of the parent body or its reduction to impotence. Though the idea of letting crafts form federations was definitely turned down by the 1936 decision to adhere to "branch of industry" lines, just where the "branch" began and ended quickly became a matter of dispute. The original constitutional amendment offered in 1936 to specify the federations which might be formed had included numerous different groupings other than those named in the amendment as finally adopted. The Woolen and Worsted Federation tried to have the felt workers included in their group, but the Committee on Laws omitted the felt workers from the Woolen and Worsted Federation and said that the felt workers could have a federation of their own in the future if they so desired and if the Executive Council thought it feasible. Before the amendment specifying the permissible federations was adopted, it shuttled back and forth between the committee and the floor amid warm debate.<sup>15</sup> With the difficulty of defining precisely the bounds of federation jurisdiction because of frequently overlapping fields, and in view of the possibility of jurisdictional quarrels over the small specialized sections of the textile industry, the federation system had potentialities of disruption even greater than the craft secessions which had earlier plagued the U.T.W. Unless the national union managed to maintain strict control over the federations and placed a reasonable limit upon the number of federations which might be formed out of the innumerable subdivisions of the industry, textile unionism would be thoroughly Balkanized.

That the officers of the U.T.W. were well-aware of these dangers was clearly indicated at the 1936 convention, for even at this early date the newly formed federations were conducting their operations with a complete disregard for the parent body to which they were supposed

to be subordinate.<sup>16</sup> That the fears of the U.T.W. officers were not unfounded was shown later when the Woolen and Worsted Federation became the nucleus of a secession from the T.W.O.C. After more than thirty years of widely fluctuating strength and membership, the U.T.W. finally revised its structure in the hope of coping with the problems imposed by the diversity of the textile industry. The federation plan, though it possessed dangerous centrifugal tendencies, had at least the virtue of taking the bull by the horns in an attempt to rescue the union from the depths to which it had fallen by the early thirties.

To meet the problems of organizing the heterogeneous mass of unskilled and foreign workers in the cotton mills, and to cope with the question of industrial or plant locals versus craft locals, the U.T.W. did virtually nothing. Up to 1911 over 85 per cent of the U.T.W. locals were on a craft basis. It was not until the 1912 Lawrence strike and the war-period expansion brought in large numbers of foreign and unskilled workers in New England, and Southern workers with no tradition of craft, that the dominance of the craft locals within the U.T.W. began to fade. By 1920 less than half of the locals were on a craft basis, and in the South only a very small fraction of the locals organized in 1919-20 were by craft.<sup>17</sup> With the loss of the Southern membership after the 1921 strike and the New England union decline after the 1922 strike, the industrial locals again became unimportant except for a brief while in 1929-1931 when Southern locals again temporarily raised the proportion of industrial locals.<sup>18</sup> The accession of the New Bedford locals in 1928, of course, strengthened the position of the crafts. Yet in spite of the demonstrated success of the left-wing unions in organizing the cotton mill workers along industrial lines, and in spite of the U.T.W. experience which indicated that the unskilled, semi-skilled and foreign-born workers cared little for craft lines, the choice of forms was left to chance and local circumstances instead of being a matter of fundamental policy. Not until after 1930 was organization by mills rather than crafts made part of the U.T.W. policy.<sup>19</sup> With craft unionism dominating the U.T.W. it was not uncommon for one craft to work in a mill while another craft was striking,<sup>20</sup> or for one craft to return to work while the other workers remained on strike. This, of course, hardly raised the U.T.W. in the eyes of the unorganized workers—but it was not until 1936 that this state of affairs was corrected, over the protests of the crafts, by an amendment to the U.T.W. constitution.<sup>21</sup>

Although occasional use was made of foreign-language speakers,<sup>22</sup> little more than lip service was usually given to the problems of organ-

izing the foreign-born workers and the unskilled and semi-skilled operatives.<sup>23</sup> The skilled workers were a minority in the industry, and in New England more than half the workers before 1930 were foreign-born, but the union preferred the skilled, for in the words of a U.T.W. president they were "the most intelligent and the easiest to organize . . . They are also of more value to us than the unskilled workers . . ." <sup>24</sup> Part of the failure of the union to tackle the problem of the unskilled and foreign-born was due to sheer weakness attributable to the internal dissension which rent the union before the First World War and led to the secession of several craft groups, while after the war the New England section of the industry started down a toboggan slide which made union action in any direction very difficult unless the South was organized. And with the union struggling to keep from going under completely in New England, organizing the South was out of the question,<sup>25</sup> for experience had shown that unionism would not stick in the South without persistent and expensive effort.<sup>26</sup>

But part of the failure must be laid at the door of the U.T.W. officials themselves. For the U.T.W. during most of its history was controlled by the craft locals whose concern was with the skilled workers who constituted their membership. Except for brief periods just before and after the First World War, the U.T.W. was dominated by craft locals led by officials of British, Scotch, or Irish origin.<sup>27</sup> A good degree of complacency toward the unorganized is also attributable to the ease with which the union led the unorganized during disputes. On occasion the immigrants even provided the strike leadership.<sup>28</sup> Time and time again the unorganized and foreign-born walked out in solid support of strikes called by the craft minority.<sup>29</sup> The 1904 Fall River Strike, for example, saw 26,000 workers walk out, though the strike was called by five locals with only 4,000-5,000 members.<sup>30</sup> The 1934 general strike illustrated the same condition. Had the unorganized workers who followed the union lead in strikes been taken into the union, the craft leaders would have been faced with a loss of control over the national organization; this they did not relish.<sup>31</sup> It was easier to keep a minority under craft control and rely on the unorganized to help make strikes effective. The maintenance of occupational wage differentials in the cotton mill meant that wage changes were usually made for all workers, so that the unorganized had an incentive to follow the union's lead. Nevertheless, union complaints of strikebreaking by the unorganized shows that the latter were not always willing to follow a union which paid them so little attention.

The same situation existed in regard to the women, who were such a large proportion of the labor force. The union made no special efforts to attract these workers,<sup>32</sup> very few of whom were in the skilled class. Data for 1910 and 1920 show that the percentage of organized women in the textile industry was smaller than the percentage of men in unions,<sup>33</sup> though at times they were organized in the same proportion as the men.<sup>34</sup> In spite of this, women proved themselves able strikers whether or not they were in the union.<sup>35</sup>

Making no move to cope with the complexity of the industry until the federation system was set up in the early thirties, and doing little to organize the foreign-born, the unskilled, the women, and the important Southern section of cotton manufacturing, the weakness of the U.T.W. is readily understandable. The strength which an employer-union contract represents was rarely reached in the history of the U.T.W. in cotton mills.<sup>36</sup> The instability of the union's position is shown by its large local and membership turnover. In 1903-1921 the union took on and lost locals at an annual rate of 30 per cent of the average number of locals in existence, and the turnover of membership was even larger.<sup>37</sup> These weaknesses were accentuated by other aspects of U.T.W. policy. The constant conflicts with other unions in the field brought the U.T.W. neither membership nor respect,<sup>38</sup> and gave weight to the accusation from the left wing that "The U.T.W. leaders have the usual dog-in-the-manger policy. Unwilling and unable themselves to organize the textile workers, they bitterly resist the formation of other organizations."<sup>39</sup> And U.T.W. officers did not hesitate to supply U.T.W. members to plants struck by opposition unions whether left or right wing.<sup>40</sup> In June, 1919, the U.T.W. devoted space in its publication to a diatribe against A.T.W. on the grounds that it was un-American, Bolshevik, and Jewish!<sup>41</sup> Attempts to democratize the administration of the union by means of proportional representation of the locals at the conventions, and other methods, were generally defeated in such a manner as to leave the union officers open to the charge of committee packing and "rule or ruin" policies.<sup>42</sup> The U.T.W. officials' stand toward strikes and negotiations with employers also left much to be desired.<sup>43</sup> Conservative to an extreme, they constantly withheld endorsement of strikes in the face of the workers' demand for decisive action. Whether the strike was endorsed or not, the union shared the aftermath. The officers devoted themselves unstintingly to the settlement of strikes with little regard for the wishes of the membership, and to this end they cloaked their negotiations with the employers in secrecy and presented the settlement as a *fait*

*accompli*.<sup>44</sup> Whether the strikers wished to return on these terms or not was of little consequence to the officers, for after the "settlement" any continuation would be an outlaw strike and the morale of the strikers would have been badly shaken. These tactics of the officers meant conflicts with the striking locals,<sup>45</sup> and in some cases led to the dissolution of the local or, as in the case of the Independent Sheet Metal Workers Union, to the formation of new unions outside the U.T.W. There were also other cases of this sort—the Philadelphia upholstery weavers became an independent union in 1931 after a conflict with U.T.W. officers,<sup>46</sup> and further instances in specialty branches of the industry could be cited.<sup>47</sup> When the U.T.W. sent its locals back to work without consulting all the strikers, during a strike in which the majority of the strikers were unorganized or under the tutelage of another union, the U.T.W. gained another black mark in the eyes of the unorganized.<sup>48</sup> Even in strikes endorsed and conducted by the U.T.W., the officers' inability to see the workers' point of view and their failure to deal frankly with the whys and wherefores of a union defeat had unfortunate results. The 1930 Danville strike, for instance, was a disastrous loss, but the union officers' insistence on calling the settlement a victory and a vindication of the right to organize<sup>49</sup> was nothing more than an insult to the workers' intelligence. The local went to pieces, where a frank admission of defeat and a plan for doing better next time might have held together a good nucleus of members. The inconclusive ending of the 1934 general strike is another illustration of this.<sup>50</sup>

Contrasting with the weaknesses of unionism in cotton manufacturing before the advent of the C.I.O. stood the solid strength of the employers, both individually and in their various associations. Cotton mill employers were among the first in this country to organize. The Hampden County (Massachusetts) Cotton Spinners Association, formed in 1854, became the New England Cotton Manufacturers Association by 1865, and in 1906 changed its name to the National Association of Cotton Manufacturers.<sup>51</sup> With its headquarters in Boston, the National Association of Cotton Manufacturers speaks for the New England mills. The Southern mills are represented by the American Cotton Manufacturers' Association, which was formed in 1897 with headquarters in Charlotte.<sup>52</sup> These two national (really sectional) associations act on matters of general interest to their groups, such as the tariff and other national legislation and labor relations. There are other organizations in New England and the South which concern themselves with technical aspects of cotton manufacturing,<sup>53</sup> and still

other groups whose main interest is the regulation and curtailment of output. Most important among the latter type of organizations is the Cotton-Textile Institute, which was formed in 1926 to promote the interests of the mills on a national scale; with the curtailment of production as its basic purpose.<sup>54</sup> Many mill owners are also members of other employer organizations, such as the National Association of Manufacturers.<sup>55</sup> The N.A.M. was formed in 1895 but not until about 1902 did it become a spearhead of belligerent opposition to remedial legislation and organized labor. The N.A.M. is associated with other employer groups through common membership, and in 1915 the N.A.M. published an article in its official organ defending working conditions in cotton mills.<sup>56</sup>

Perhaps most important from the point of view of labor, however, have been the state and local associations of cotton mills. While the larger organizations deal incidentally with labor questions and the local and state associations are active in connection with state legislation, the ability to present a solid front to the workers in times of labor trouble is the primary purpose of the local and state groups.<sup>57</sup> The Fall River Cotton Manufacturers Association was formed in 1873 and two years later represented the cotton mills of the city in negotiations with a committee of the weavers.<sup>58</sup> Before the end of the first decade of the present century similar organizations were established by the employers in Lowell and New Bedford.<sup>59</sup> By 1928 there were state associations in Rhode Island, Alabama, Georgia, and the Carolinas, among the important cotton manufacturing states.<sup>60</sup> These state and local groups have united the mills on matters of labor policy and labor legislation. The Arkwright Club (an organization of mill treasurers with offices in Boston), for example, carried on a campaign during the twenties for the repeal of the Massachusetts 48-hour law for women.<sup>61</sup> During the 1929-1931 Southern strikes the employers' organizations brought pressure to bear on employers who might have yielded.<sup>62</sup> The Southern employers were practically unanimous in their opposition to unionism and any mill which yielded could expect only antagonism from the associations and their members. The mill owner who held out against the union would, on the other hand, receive the solid support of his fellow employers.<sup>63</sup>

But regardless of employer organization, the cotton mill owner had certain advantages in dealing with his employees which employers in many other industries did not have. The low wages in the industry have meant low bargaining power for the workers in the day-to-day relationships. In times of conflict the same factor has meant poor



staying power, except when public sympathy has brought aid far beyond the resources of the workers or the unions. The employer has had further advantages in the existence of company housing and mill stores. With the employer owning the houses and the store, nothing was easier at the first sign of union activity than to discharge the union members, cut off their credit at the mill store, and evict them from the company houses. In fact, just this sequence of events has occurred time and again in the history of labor conflict in the industry. An analysis of strikes mentioned in U.T.W. Convention Proceedings from 1901-1916 showed that the second most important cause of strikes was the discharge of union members.<sup>64</sup> To list all the instances of discriminatory discharge and evictions would take many pages. Omitting entirely the happenings before 1900, here is a partial list of the cases in which these methods of combating unionism were used: in 1900, by 17 mills in Alamance County, N.C.; in the same year, by the Proximity Mills of Greensboro, N. C.; in Augusta, Ga., in 1902; in 1904-5 in Fall River, Mass.; in 1905, in Chicopee, Mass.; in 1907 in Columbia, S. C.; in 1914 in Atlanta, Ga.; in 1918 in Columbus, Ga.; in 1918 in Macon, Ga.; in 1922 in Lonsdale and Berkeley, R. I.; in 1925 in Willimantic, Conn.; in 1927 at Henderson, N. C.; in 1929 in Marion and Gastonia, N. C.; in 1930 in Greensboro, N. C.; in 1930 at Danville, Va.; in 1932 in Rockingham, N. C.; in Rock Hill, S. C., in 1933; and in the same year in a scattering of mills in Tennessee and South Carolina, and in Rome, Ga.<sup>65</sup> This partial list could be extended almost indefinitely with cases which resulted from the union drive for membership during the NRA period.<sup>66</sup>

Under the provisions of the NRA code the Cotton Textile National Industrial Relations Board was set up by the President in August, 1933, to deal with problems arising out of the stretch-out,<sup>67</sup> but its scope was later extended to cover all problems of working conditions or code violation.<sup>68</sup> Under the CTNIRB there were formed state boards of a similar character.<sup>69</sup> Many allegations of discriminatory discharge of union members in violation of section 7(a) of the NIRA were brought before the CTNIRB, but even where the board upheld the charge it was powerless to enforce its decision and the mills disregarded the board.<sup>70</sup> The Alabama general strike in 1934 (which preceded the nation-wide general strike of the same year) was caused by wholesale discrimination against union members.<sup>71</sup> When the 1934 general strike came there were still several thousand unsettled complaints before the CTNIRB.<sup>72</sup> The 1934 general strike saw the end of the CTNIRB,<sup>73</sup> and resulted in the discriminatory discharge of thou-

sands and thousands of union members, as well as many evictions.<sup>74</sup> For, in the company towns of the South, discharge automatically means eviction. As part of the strike settlement, the President, under the authority of Public Resolution 44, set up the Textile Labor Relations Board on September 26, 1934,<sup>75</sup> but the TLRB had little more power and ran into the same employer resistance as had its predecessor in the field,<sup>76</sup> with the result that discrimination and evictions continued.<sup>77</sup> The 8-month history of the TLRB before the NIRA was invalidated was practically all devoted to attempts to clear up the mass of discrimination cases resulting from the 1934 general strike.<sup>78</sup> Most of the 432 cotton mills involved in these cases were Southern mills. Less than two-thirds of the cases were closed by ordering the restoration of the workers to their jobs (according to the figures of the board), and since the board had no record of whether or not the employers were complying with its decisions,<sup>79</sup> probably fewer than half the complainants actually were returned to work.<sup>80</sup> As a matter of fact, at a 1936 Congressional hearing, the U.T.W. submitted a list of 117 Southern cotton mills which never complied with the TLRB decisions.<sup>81</sup>

After the end of the NIRA in May, 1935, cases of discrimination against union members came under the statutory ban of the National Labor Relations Act which became law in July, 1935, but the attempts of the mill owners to defeat the workers' desire for organization by means of discriminatory discharge and eviction did not cease.<sup>82</sup> In the half dozen cases involving charges of discrimination against union members, before the formation of the T.W.O.C. early in 1937, the U.T.W. allegations were upheld by the National Labor Relations Board in every case.<sup>83</sup> But the mills refused to comply with the Board orders and resorted to all kinds of dilatory tactics to defeat the purposes of the NLRA.<sup>84</sup> In 1936 Chairman Madden of the NLRB testified that employers in the textile industry were resisting all efforts of the Board to enforce the law and that the orders issued by the Board were not being complied with, while the Board was unable to proceed against the violators because of an inadequate staff.<sup>85</sup>

When discriminatory discharge and evictions failed to break the worker of an inclination for union organization, the mill owner turned to any one or more of a half dozen weapons whose effectiveness had been proved. The blacklist and the yellow-dog contract have both had long histories in cotton manufacturing. In the early 1830's the New England mills used a certificate of honorable discharge, which could not be obtained by employees who engaged in collective

activities and without which it was difficult for workers to secure employment in other mills.<sup>86</sup> The use of the yellow-dog contract, and of the blacklist, to disrupt unions has already been noted in connection with the craft unions before 1900. The influence of the blacklist on these craft unions is indicated by the provisions which these unions made for the continuation of strike benefits to workers who were unable to find work after the termination of a strike. The blacklisting of union officials and of key figures in union organization first led the New England craft unions into the use of full-time paid officials to give the officers greater freedom of action by releasing them from dependence on their mill jobs.<sup>87</sup> Many workers were blacklisted after the 1904 Fall River strike,<sup>88</sup> and the same punishment was threatened for those who signed the strike petition at Lawrence in 1912.<sup>89</sup> After the 1928 New Bedford strike, workers had to swear they were not members of the N.T.W.U. before getting their jobs back.<sup>90</sup>

In the South there was little enough unionism before the T.W.O.C. began its work, but whatever organizing did occur was immediately subject to yellow-dog and blacklist tactics. After the 1900 strike in Greensboro the mill started up under yellow-dog contracts, and all who remained loyal to the union and sought employment elsewhere found that they were refused employment.<sup>91</sup> The Alamance County, North Carolina, strikers in the same year found themselves in the same predicament.<sup>92</sup> Indeed, it was tacitly understood by workers and employers that union membership made one liable to discharge, and during the 1918 strike in Columbus, Ga., one strongly proemployer pamphlet noted that every mill in the city always had yellow-dog contracts, either verbal or written, as part of their employment policy.<sup>93</sup> The 1929-1931 strikes in the South saw the same yellow-dog and blacklist in use again.<sup>94</sup> In some cases these took the form of bulletin board warnings and "loyalty pledges." Similar tactics were used by the employers after the 1934 general strike.<sup>95</sup> Laws to protect the workers against either yellow-dog contracts or blacklisting or both had been passed by seven cotton mill states before the NIRA.<sup>96</sup> But such laws were of doubtful constitutionality<sup>97</sup> and at best were difficult to enforce.<sup>98</sup> The Norris-LaGuardia Act of 1932 made yellow-dog contracts unenforceable in the federal courts,<sup>99</sup> but this was of little help to the cotton mill workers. Not until the passage of the NIRA and the NLRA, guaranteeing the right of the worker to organize, was there any effective legal protection against these employer tactics. Yet in spite of the NLRA the employers have on occasion tried to continue this repression under the guise of the "loyalty pledge."<sup>100</sup>

If discriminatory discharge, evictions, blacklisting, and yellow-dog contracts failed to ensure "loyal" workers, the mill owner delved still further into his well-stocked antiunion arsenal and brought out labor spies, troops, and deputies to terrorize the workers, and company unions to control the workers and keep them out of bona fide unions. He also utilized the local governmental machinery to run union organizers out of town, arrest and jail them on trumped-up charges, have injunctions issued to deprive the workers of their civil liberties, and made it clear to the workers that the forces of "law and order" would stop at no lawlessness to beat the union.

The use of labor spies to report on union activities and sympathies has a long and dishonorable history as the account of unionism in the industry before 1900 has shown. The U.T.W. organizers in the decade after the First World War reported continual attempts to discredit the union by the use of spies.<sup>101</sup> Southern mills especially used these tactics,<sup>102</sup> though New England mills were not far behind.<sup>103</sup> The LaFollette Committee reports showed that several mills had their spy work done by the notorious Pinkerton agency.<sup>104</sup> The whole organized machinery of intimidation, in which labor espionage is frequently only preliminary or incidental, rapidly becomes a campaign of violence and terrorism under the impact of an actual strike or organizing campaign. Almost every issue of the U.T.W. organ contained reports of attacks on pickets and union members. Union organizers were "escorted" out of town,<sup>105</sup> or beaten up to emphasize the point,<sup>106</sup> and the organizers frequently took their lives in their hands when they walked the streets of a mill town.<sup>107</sup> At the beginning of the present century the secretary of the Southern Industrial Convention and the Chamber of Commerce of Huntsville, Ala., believed that laws should be passed making it justifiable homicide for a nonunion man to shoot a union picket.<sup>108</sup> Almost every organizer's report in the U.T.W. *Textile Worker* carries material on violence against pickets and union members. In the 1934 general strike one large Southern outfit enlisted the aid of the country's most notorious strikebreaker and his collection of thugs and gunmen.<sup>109</sup> In fact, this strike provided examples of violence toward strikers on a scale unprecedented in the labor history of this country.<sup>110</sup>

The local governments co-operate in various ways with the employer in these antiunion crusades. In 1930, in Georgia, six workers, including two Negroes, were arrested and charged with insurrection under an 1866 statute because they distributed literature calling on the white and Negro workers to organize together.<sup>111</sup> One Southern

city council forbade the U.T.W. to erect a tent colony to house evicted strikers in 1930.<sup>112</sup> In a small North Carolina town in 1932 where a strike took place, two workers received chain gang sentences because they were suspected of having fired at the sheriff.<sup>113</sup> The use of the National Guard and other armed forces in strikes has been common in both regions.<sup>114</sup> When union members and organizers were being assaulted and killed, the local police and other forces of "law and order" were mysteriously absent from the scene or appeared just in time to arrest union leaders on various charges.<sup>115</sup> The 1929-1931 strikes in the South saw the flogging, killing, and kidnaping of strikers go unpunished while union members got heavy sentences for the death of a single officer,<sup>116</sup> after a trial from which every element of justice was missing.<sup>117</sup> The 1934 general strike, however, made an all-time record in official harassing of strikers. In Georgia hundreds of strikers were confined in concentration camps until the strike was over. No charges were filed against them—they were merely "detained."<sup>118</sup> And according to one observer, the governor who executed this Hitlerian coup received a handsome gift of \$20,000 for "campaign purposes" from the Georgia mill owners.<sup>119</sup>

The mill owners had little reason to resort to company unions until recent years. Usually the various methods described above were sufficient to keep the workers in line and out of the union. The employers, furthermore, had no desire to give the workers even a shadow of a voice in determining working conditions. It has usually been only after outright employer aggression has failed that the more subtle tactic of the company union has been introduced. Company unions have also appeared, however, when the employer did not care at the moment to shoulder the cost and disruption of work which accompanied open conflict. Union expansion during the period of the First World War, for example, brought with it the concomitant beginnings of company unionism in the cotton mills. In 1919 five Southern cotton mills started their company unions.<sup>120</sup> The early twenties saw the formation of several company unions in New England.<sup>121</sup> Some of the company unions were maintained all through the twenties.<sup>122</sup> As a whole, the company union tactic was not widely used in cotton mills before 1933 because the employers found it unnecessary. After the NRA started and unionism began to grow, company unions appeared in greater numbers, especially in the South.<sup>123</sup> The 1934 general strike brought many additions, usually in the form of "good will" clubs.<sup>124</sup> The character of these organizations is indicated by the exclusion from membership in some of them of operatives who

were members of any labor organization.<sup>125</sup> In spite of the statutory ban of the NLRA, the formation of company unions continued and the NLRB was forced to take action against these continuing violations of the law. Before the formation of the T.W.O.C., the U.T.W. had brought action before the board which resulted in orders disestablishing three company unions.<sup>126</sup> In another case the board stigmatized an independent organization as company-dominated, but took no action because the U.T.W. had not filed charges on this point.<sup>127</sup> In one case the mill went so far as to sign a closed-shop contract with the company union, albeit the contract had no other provisions but this!<sup>128</sup>

## NOTES TO CHAPTER

<sup>1</sup> *The Old Factory Towns in New England*, *op. cit.*, p. 292; Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. XV, p. 421; Senate Document 633, *op. cit.*, Vol. 10, Part 3, pp. 121, 124-6.

<sup>2</sup> *Textile Worker*, *op. cit.*, June, 1932, p. 92.

<sup>3</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 354-8.

<sup>4</sup> *Textile Worker*, *op. cit.*, August, 1934, p. 358.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, August, 1934, pp. 328-9.

<sup>6</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 354-8, 361.

<sup>7</sup> United Textile Workers of America, A.F. of L., *Proceedings*, 1936 (condensed version), p. 19.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 1936, pp. 46-8.

<sup>9</sup> United Textile Workers of America, A.F. of L., *Constitution and By-Laws*, Revised September 1936, Article II, Section 5b.

<sup>10</sup> U.T.W., *Proceedings*, *op. cit.*, 1936, pp. 91, 94.

<sup>11</sup> U.T.W., *Constitution and By-Laws*, *op. cit.*, Article II, Section 9.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Article XVI.

<sup>13</sup> *Union News Service*, *op. cit.*, March 15, 1937.

<sup>14</sup> U.T.W., *Proceedings*, *op. cit.*, 1936, p. 37.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 1936, pp. 15, 46-8, 68.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 1936, pp. 6, 29-30, 37.

<sup>17</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 73; McMahon, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>18</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

<sup>19</sup> U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Labor, *Hearings on H.R. 4884 and H.R. 6450*, 74th Congress, 1st Session, Washington, 1935, p. 118.

<sup>20</sup> Dunn and Hardy, *op. cit.*, p. 183; U.T.W., *Proceedings*, *op. cit.*, 1936, p. 91.

<sup>21</sup> U.T.W., *Proceedings*, *op. cit.*, 1936, pp. 48, 68-9.

<sup>22</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 137, 149-51.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135, citing speech of John Golden at 1905 U.T.W. convention; U.S. Senate, Committee on Education and Labor, *Hearings on S. Res. 177*, 69th Congress, 1st Session, Washington, 1926, p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> J. B. S. Hardman (ed.), *American Labor Dynamics*, Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1928, p. 38.

<sup>26</sup> Tippet, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

<sup>27</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-7.

<sup>28</sup> Shlakman, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

<sup>29</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 287-8.

- <sup>30</sup> *Massachusetts Labor Bulletin*, op. cit., December, 1904, pp. 321-2.
- <sup>31</sup> Benjamin Stolberg, *The Story of the C.I.O.*, The Viking Press, New York, 1938, pp. 10, 207-8.
- <sup>32</sup> Theresa Wolfson, *The Woman Worker and the Trade Unions*, International Publishers, New York, 1926, p. 124.
- <sup>33</sup> Leo Wolman, *The Growth of American Trade Unions, 1880-1923*, National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc., New York, 1924, pp. 141, 151.
- <sup>34</sup> *Massachusetts, Annual Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor*, 1908, p. 197; Senate Document 645, op. cit., Vol. X, p. 176.
- <sup>35</sup> *Textile Unionism and the South*, op. cit., p. 87; Senate Document 645, op. cit., Vol. X, p. 177; Industrial Commission, op. cit., Vol. XVII, p. cxxxviii.
- <sup>36</sup> *Textile Worker*, op. cit., September 19, 1936, pp. 5-6.
- <sup>37</sup> Brooks, op. cit., pp. 64-5.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 149-51; *Textile Unionism and the South*, op. cit., p. 17.
- <sup>39</sup> William Z. Foster, *Misleaders of Labor*, Trade Union Educational League, New York, 1927, p. 155.
- <sup>40</sup> Brooks, op. cit., pp. 116-8.
- <sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 236.
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 111-4, 123-5.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 294, 319-24.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 133, 278.
- <sup>45</sup> Shlakman, op. cit., pp. 219-20.
- <sup>46</sup> Gladys L. Palmer, *Union Tactics and Economic Change*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1932, pp. 52, 72-4.
- <sup>47</sup> Brooks, op. cit., p. 206ff.
- <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 221.
- <sup>49</sup> Tippet, op. cit., pp. 265-8.
- <sup>50</sup> *Labor on the March*, op. cit., p. 75.
- <sup>51</sup> Copeland, op. cit., p. 155.
- <sup>52</sup> The date of formation is usually given as 1903, but the stationery of the Association carries 1897 as the date of formation, though it was not incorporated until 1903.
- <sup>53</sup> Frederic William Wile, *A Century of Industrial Progress*, Doubleday, Doran & Co. Inc., New York, 1928, p. 149.
- <sup>54</sup> Whitney, op. cit., pp. 63-70.
- <sup>55</sup> *Hearings on H.R. 9072*, op. cit., p. 409.
- <sup>56</sup> Clarence E. Bonnett, *Employers' Associations in the United States*, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1922, pp. 301-13, 350, 362.
- <sup>57</sup> Copeland, op. cit., pp. 156-7; Dunn and Hardy, op. cit., p. 157.
- <sup>58</sup> Howard, op. cit., p. 13.
- <sup>59</sup> *Massachusetts Labor Bulletin*, op. cit., January, 1908, pp. 32-33, May 1908, p. 222.
- <sup>60</sup> Wile, op. cit., p. 149.
- <sup>61</sup> Dunn and Hardy, op. cit., p. 159.
- <sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 157-8; Lorwin, op. cit., p. 257.
- <sup>63</sup> *The Industrial Revolution in the South*, op. cit., pp. 21-2.
- <sup>64</sup> Dunn and Hardy, op. cit., p. 213.
- <sup>65</sup> *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill*, op. cit., pp. 192-5; *Strikes and Lock-outs in North Carolina*, op. cit., pp. 136-8; Shlakman, op. cit., p. 216; *Textile Unionism and the South*, op. cit., p. 32; Dunn and Hardy, op. cit., pp. 228-9, 230; *Monthly Labor Review*, op. cit., October, 1927, pp. 120-1; *Textile Notes*, op. cit., September, 1932, July, 1933, September, 1933; Tippet, op. cit., pp. 202, 208, 215, 221, 243; Brooks, op. cit., pp. 296, 299, 301, 302, 305, 310, 311; National Recovery Administration, press release, 2066, December 4, 1933.
- <sup>66</sup> *Textile Worker*, op. cit., January, 1934, pp. 3, 18-20; *Textile Notes*, op. cit., June, 1934, August, 1934; *Hearings on S. 2926*, op. cit., pp. 275-6.
- <sup>67</sup> Work Materials #35, op. cit., p. 49.
- <sup>68</sup> *Codes of Fair Competition*, op. cit., Vol. XIII, pp. 261-3.

- <sup>69</sup> National Recovery Administration, press release 4453, April 23, 1934.
- <sup>70</sup> *Textile Worker*, op. cit., January, 1934, p. 3.
- <sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, July, 1934, p. 307.
- <sup>72</sup> *Hearings on H.R. 9072*, op. cit., p. 261.
- <sup>73</sup> *Codes of Fair Competition*, op. cit., Vol. XVIII, pp. 189-90.
- <sup>74</sup> *Hearings on H.R. 9072*, op. cit., p. 65, 278; *Labor on the March*, op. cit., pp. 75-78; *Hearings on H.R. 4884 and H.R. 6450*, op. cit., p. 107; U.T.W. *Proceedings*, op. cit., 1936, p. 8.
- <sup>75</sup> *Codes of Fair Competition*, op. cit., Vol. XVII, pp. 459-61.
- <sup>76</sup> Lewis L. Lorwin and Arthur Wubnig, *Labor Relations Boards*, The Brookings Institution, Washington, 1935, pp. 422-6.
- <sup>77</sup> *Textile Worker*, op. cit., September 19, 1936, *passim*.
- <sup>78</sup> Lorwin and Wubnig, op. cit., pp. 422-6.
- <sup>79</sup> *Hearings on H.R. 9072*, op. cit., pp. 182-5, 646-51.
- <sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 169-70, 278-9.
- <sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 776-7.
- <sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 163, 170, 173, 340-1; *Textile Worker*, op. cit., November 7, 1936, p. 4; *Textile Notes*, op. cit., August, 1935, October, 1935, April, 1936, April, 1937; *National News Letter*, op. cit., October 25, 1938, November 25 1938.
- <sup>83</sup> National Labor Relations Board, *Decisions and Orders*, 1:97, 2:20, 952, 1081, 3:267, 4:731.
- <sup>84</sup> *Textile Worker*, op. cit., September 19, 1936, p. 5.
- <sup>85</sup> *Hearings on H.R. 9072*, op. cit., pp. 213-7.
- <sup>86</sup> *When Labor Organizes*, op. cit., p. 81.
- <sup>87</sup> Industrial Commission, op. cit., Vol. XIV, p. 581.
- <sup>88</sup> Dunn and Hardy, op. cit., p. 218.
- <sup>89</sup> Beal, op. cit., p. 39.
- <sup>90</sup> Dunn and Hardy, op. cit., p. 161. Source relates this to Fall River, but this is evidently an error.
- <sup>91</sup> *Strikes and Lockouts in North Carolina*, op. cit., pp. 136-8.
- <sup>92</sup> Industrial Commission, op. cit., Vol. VII, p. 497.
- <sup>93</sup> Gordon, op. cit., pp. 4-5.
- <sup>94</sup> Dunn and Hardy, op. cit., p. 161; *Textile Unionism and the South*, op. cit., pp. 76-8, 80.
- <sup>95</sup> *Hearings on H.R. 9072*, op. cit., pp. 163-4; *Labor on the March*, op. cit., p. 76.
- <sup>96</sup> Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Connecticut, Virginia, North Carolina, Alabama. U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, *Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Commissioner of Labor*, 1907, *Labor Laws of the United States*, pp. 130, 231, 594, 1339; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Laws of the United States With Decisions of Courts Relating Thereto*, Bulletin No. 148, Washington, 1914, pp. 417, 422, 1371-2, 1575; Maine, *Acts*, op. cit., 1933, ch. 108.
- <sup>97</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Laws of the United States With Decisions of Courts Relating Thereto*, Bulletin No. 370, Washington, 1925, pp. 114-5.
- <sup>98</sup> Industrial Relations Commission, op. cit., Vol. XI, p. 10457.
- <sup>99</sup> U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Legislation, 1931 and 1922*, Bulletin No. 590, Washington, 1933, pp. 151-4.
- <sup>100</sup> 1 N.L.R.B. 147, 157.
- <sup>101</sup> Brooks, op. cit., p. 141.
- <sup>102</sup> *Textile Worker*, op. cit., June, 1934, pp. 260-6; *Hearings on H.R. 9072*, op. cit., p. 265.
- <sup>103</sup> Sidney Howard and Robert Dunn, *The Labor Spy*, Republic Publishing Co., New York, 1924, p. 159; Robert W. Dunn, *Spying on Workers*, International Pamphlets, New York, 1932, pp. 17-18; Labor Research Association, *Labor Notes*, October, 1936, November, 1936.
- <sup>104</sup> *National News Letter*, op. cit., March 30, 1938.



- <sup>105</sup> *Textile Worker*, *op. cit.*, July, 1929, *passim*.  
<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, May 2, 1936, p. 4; *Hearings on H.R. 9072*, *op. cit.*, pp. 275-6.  
<sup>107</sup> *Hearings on H.R. 9072*, *op. cit.*, p. 169ff.  
<sup>108</sup> Industrial Commission, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, p. 759.  
<sup>109</sup> *Hearings on H.R. 4884 and H.R. 6450*, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-4; *I Break Strikes!*, *op. cit.*, pp. 283-5.  
<sup>110</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 384-5.  
<sup>111</sup> *Labor Fact Book* [I], *op. cit.*, p. 157.  
<sup>112</sup> Tippet, *op. cit.*, p. 204.  
<sup>113</sup> *Textile Notes*, *op. cit.*, March, 1932.  
<sup>114</sup> *Textile Unionism and the South*, *op. cit.*, p. 85; Tippet, *op. cit.*, p. 42; *Labor Fact Book* III, *op. cit.*, pp. 177-8.  
<sup>115</sup> *When Labor Organizes*, *op. cit.*, pp. 155-6.  
<sup>116</sup> Dabney, *op. cit.*, pp. 326-7.  
<sup>117</sup> *The Southern Textile Situation*, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-1.  
<sup>118</sup> *When Labor Organizes*, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-3.  
<sup>119</sup> Stolberg, *op. cit.*, p. 98.  
<sup>120</sup> National Industrial Conference Board, *Experience With Works Councils in the United States*, Research Report #50, New York, 1922, pp. 185-91, *The Growth of Works Councils in the United States*, Special Report #32, New York, 1925, *passim*.  
<sup>121</sup> Robert W. Dunn, *Company Unions*, Vanguard Press, New York, 1927, pp. 56-64.  
<sup>122</sup> National Industrial Conference Board, *Collective Bargaining Through Employee Representation*, New York, 1933, pp. 47-48; Duane McCracken, *Strike Injunctions in the New South*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1931, pp. 114, 265-8.  
<sup>123</sup> *Hearings on H.R. 4884 and H.R. 6450*, *op. cit.*, p. 107.  
<sup>124</sup> *Hearings on H.R. 9072*, *op. cit.*, pp. 210, 214; *Textile Notes*, *op. cit.*, September, 1935, February, 1936.  
<sup>125</sup> *Textile Notes*, *op. cit.*, May, 1935; 1 N.L.R.B. 97.  
<sup>126</sup> N.L.R.B. 1:97, 2:1081, 3:267.  
<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:309.  
<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:97.

UNIONISM in cotton manufacturing had a tremendous task in attempting to cope with the complexity of the industry, the large numbers of women and children, the racial heterogeneity of the workers in New England, and the rural background of the workers and lack of union tradition in the South. To these obstacles must be added the strength of the employers, both individually and organized in their various associations. Without hesitation the employers met the unions with discriminatory discharge, evictions from mill-owned houses, blacklisting, yellow-dog contracts, labor spies, violence, company unions, and connivance with local government officials to deprive the workers of their civil liberties. The efficacy of these tactics was reinforced by the mill village system which gave the employer a virtual dictatorship over the personal, social, cultural, and economic life of his workers. Except for a brief while during the period of the First World War, and for an even shorter time when the NRA was still new, the unions made little progress in their struggle to enroll the workers into an organization which could meet the mill owners on equal grounds.

To match the strength of the employers, the workers needed a strong union, well-financed and ably led. Such a union does not arise overnight, but the experience of the C.I.O. in the steel and automobile industries had shown that the development of unions in the mass production industries was relatively rapid when the stage was properly arranged. All the unions in the unorganized sections of American industry, such as cotton manufacturing, have been greatly helped by the National Labor Relations Act, but credit must also be given to the use of progressive and aggressive methods of enrolling members and educating them in trade-union principles, so that their adherence will not be a fly-by-night affair. In place of slow piecemeal organization based on craft groups the new organizing techniques required the submersion of craft differences; in place of the scant funds which an individual union could muster came the large organizing chest

raised from several brother unions, to carry on the campaign and maintain the expanded union until it became self-supporting; and in place of the dependence on the traditional leaflet distributor came every device of modern campaigning from the radio to the sound truck and the movies. It was in this atmosphere that the Textile Workers Organizing Committee was formed in March, 1937. When the T.W.O.C. came into the field in early 1937 there had been several changes in the labor scene in cotton manufacturing which were destined to make the work of organization less complex than it had been in many years. The NLRA, of course, gave protection against some of the most effective tactics previously used by the employer, but full utilization of the NLRB machinery still required constant, expensive litigation. The virtual stoppage of immigration after the First World War and the processes of Americanization and education were making the New England labor force less of a racial and cultural melange. In 1930, for the first time, less than half the workers in New England were of foreign birth and by 1937 the proportion must have still further declined. In the South the rural background of the workers had faded away to a large extent, though the potential labor reserve of those still on the farms remained a background threat. In this region, too, educational advances, legislation, and technological change had removed the obstacle of child labor. By the mid-twenties a survey of 436 family heads in North Carolina cotton mills showed only 27 per cent opposed to unionism, while 30 per cent were indifferent and 43 per cent favored unions.<sup>1</sup> Also of great importance, in the South, was the growth of sentiment favorable to unionism among the clergy, the universities, and the press.<sup>2</sup>

Southern employers had long utilized the press to emphasize the "docility" of Southern labor and to carry on their antiunion campaigns.<sup>3</sup> According to one proemployer journal, "The 'Solid South' means security for every manufacturer trembling under the whiplash of the anarchistic labor leaders, to every manufacturer hovering under the rim of radical labor's volcano."<sup>4</sup> The 1929-1931 explosions somewhat upset this equanimity. A few newspaper recognized that the mill workers had grievances which the unions were trying to adjust, and that the mill owners were not the blameless victims of a radical assault as they held themselves to be.<sup>5</sup> A city editor of a Southern newspaper who naïvely assumed that he should print the news even when it was favorable to the strikers, however, soon found himself out of a job.<sup>6</sup> At the same time a legislative committee in South Carolina found that in the mills whose employees had struck the state

labor laws had been flagrantly violated without prosecution,<sup>7</sup> and middle-class liberal and church groups came to the support of the strikers.<sup>8</sup> Though the big 1929-1931 strikes were lost, they were an eye opener both to the mill owners and to the general public in the South. The subsequent years found further progress made, in winning a measure of tolerance for unionism in the South among that amorphous mass called "the public" and, regardless of their actual feelings, Southern mill owners ten years later were handling the workers with more finesse than formerly.<sup>9</sup>

The U.T.W., itself, moved toward a more progressive stand. The 1934 convention adopted resolutions calling for industrial unionism throughout the A.F. of L., criticizing the government's failure to enforce the textile codes, and supporting various advanced bills such as the Lundeen unemployment insurance bill.<sup>10</sup> In the 1932 election the U.T.W. refused to support any of the presidential candidates (though the A.F.H.W. endorsed the Socialist candidate Norman Thomas) and adopted a resolution calling for a third party, whereas similar resolutions had been lost in previous years.<sup>11</sup> At the 1935 A.F. of L. convention the U.T.W. delegates introduced a resolution calling on the A.F. of L. to begin parleys to decide if a labor party should be launched. Gorman made a vigorous speech in favor of the resolution (which was lost), condemning both major parties and pointing to relief needs, strike deaths, and the maldistribution of income as evidence of the need for a labor party.<sup>12</sup> The 1934 general strike, itself, showed a great advance over previous U.T.W. conflicts in its use of modern tactics based on the mobility afforded by the automobile, and in the utilization of high-pressure publicity devices, including the radio.<sup>13</sup> The 1936 U.T.W. convention saw the passage of many resolutions which indicated that the union was continuing its support of the movement for a labor party and the adoption of progressive legislation.<sup>14</sup>

Thomas McMahon, then president of the U.T.W., was one of the charter members of the Committee for Industrial Organization which was founded just after the 1935 A.F. of L. convention. At its own 1934 convention the U.T.W. went on record in favor of industrial unionism and this support was continued in the official U.T.W. journal<sup>15</sup> and by the delegates to the 1934 and 1935 A.F. of L. conventions.<sup>16</sup> Soon after its formation the C.I.O. received the endorsement of the U.T.W. Executive Council<sup>17</sup> and of various local units of the union.<sup>18</sup> The U.T.W. Executive Council also supported the actions of McMahon, in connection with the C.I.O., which led to the break

with the A.F. of L.,<sup>19</sup> and the entire course of action was approved by the 1936 U.T.W. convention.<sup>20</sup> In February, 1937, the U.T.W. Executive Council voted to contribute \$1,000 per month to the general campaign of the C.I.O. and urged its locals to raise funds for the same purpose by assessing the local membership.<sup>21</sup> At the same time the American Federation of Hosiery Workers voted a \$50,000 contribution to the C.I.O.<sup>22</sup>

Meanwhile the U.T.W. looked longingly at the unorganized South and solicited its locals for donations for a contemplated Southern campaign—a task too great for the U.T.W. treasury.<sup>23</sup> The response was evidently not encouraging, for the U.T.W. turned to the C.I.O. In August, 1936, the U.T.W. presented the C.I.O. with a program calling for a joint organizational effort in the South,<sup>24</sup> and in December of the same year John Brophy of the C.I.O. attended a U.T.W. Executive Council meeting which canvassed the situation.<sup>25</sup> But if the U.T.W. was thinking in terms of U.T.W.-C.I.O. co-operation on an equal and limited basis, the C.I.O. was thinking differently. With successful drives in automobiles, steel, and rubber behind it, the C.I.O. saw the textile industry as the next field in which to apply the technique of a mass organizing campaign backed by large funds and adequate personnel. Negotiations between the U.T.W. and the C.I.O. culminated early in 1937. In Washington, D.C., on March 7, 1937, the U.T.W. Executive Council unanimously approved a U.T.W.-C.I.O. contract which was signed on March 9th by John L. Lewis, Charles Howard, and Sidney Hillman for the C.I.O., and for the U.T.W. by Francis J. Gorman, who had become president of the U.T.W. in February, 1937, following the resignation of Thomas McMahon to become Director of the Department of Labor of Rhode Island.<sup>26</sup>

The U.T.W.-C.I.O. contract was simple and brief. In effect, the C.I.O. agreed to supply the money for an organizing campaign in the textile industry in return for complete control over the campaign, over the Textile Workers Organizing Committee, and over the subsequent reorganization of the U.T.W. The T.W.O.C. was to be appointed by the chairman of the C.I.O., subject only to the stipulation that two members of the T.W.O.C. must be from the U.T.W. All U.T.W. contracts, etc., were to be administered by the T.W.O.C., all U.T.W. funds were to be turned over to the T.W.O.C., and all U.T.W. officers and agents were placed under the jurisdiction and orders of the T.W.O.C.<sup>27</sup> Which adds up to the simple fact that the T.W.O.C. took over the U.T.W., lock, stock, and barrel. The T.W.O.C. was to handle the campaign, to use the U.T.W. funds and

organization as it saw fit, to take over any, all, or none of the U.T.W. officers and employees as T.W.O.C. functionaries, and to determine what should be done with the organization which resulted from the campaign.

As soon as the U.T.W.-C.I.O. contract was signed, John L. Lewis appointed the T.W.O.C. Sidney Hillman, president of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers was appointed chairman and Thomas Kennedy of the United Mine Workers became secretary-treasurer. The other members were Thomas F. Burns of the United Rubber Workers, Charles Zimmerman of the International Ladies' Garment Workers, and Charles Weinstein of the A.C.W., while the U.T.W. was represented by Francis J. Gorman, president of the U.T.W., and Emil Rieve, president of the American Federation of Hosiery Workers.<sup>28</sup> With Hillman at the head of the T.W.O.C. and the A.C.W. as the largest supplier of funds, it was only natural that A.C.W. influence would show in the T.W.O.C. personnel. Three of the six regional offices set up at the end of March were headed by men from the A.C.W.<sup>29</sup> In addition to the regional offices, the T.W.O.C. set up subregional headquarters in almost every textile center of the country. In all, some 96 subregional offices were established to keep close watch on developments and facilitate co-ordination of the campaign. To man this organization about 650 persons were engaged, with 500 of these directly on the T.W.O.C. payroll. Of the remainder, 51 organizers were furnished by the Hosiery and Dyers federations and 60 organizers came from the A.C.W. to work under the direction of the T.W.O.C. The I.L.G.W.U. and the Steel Workers Organizing Committee also assigned aides for the T.W.O.C. drive.<sup>30</sup> To the greatest possible extent, the organizers were assigned to their home districts, so that New Englanders worked in New England and Southerners in the South. The regional directors held regular study groups to train the organizers in the best methods of work and to acquaint them with the policies and the background of the organization. The directors also held regular conferences for the organizers so that current problems might be discussed. These activities were aided by national office publications and bulletins such as *Industry Notes* and the *National News Letter*.<sup>31</sup>

The T.W.O.C. started by making some radical changes in the old U.T.W. procedure. Under the U.T.W. a federation system had been developing to give each division of the textile industry a guiding center in the form of a federation for all the locals in that particular division. Only the Federation of Dyers, Finishers, Printers and Bleach-

ers of America and the American Federation of Hosiery Workers were successful and self-supporting, and the T.W.O.C. continued these federations while it abolished the others which it believed would be of no help organizationally. To co-ordinate the campaign in the different divisions of the textile industry, the T.W.O.C. used conferences which were called as the need arose. These industry conferences were supplemented by state conferences.<sup>32</sup> Farther down in the structural scale came the Joint Boards which were the means of tying together the locals of a particular small area, such as a city, and were also helpful in reducing the overhead expenses of each local by spreading the sum over several units.<sup>33</sup> Last in the scale came the local union—the basic unit of organization.

With the formation of the T.W.O.C., the chartering of U.T.W. locals was stopped and instead all new locals received T.W.O.C. charters.<sup>34</sup> It was planned to merge existing U.T.W. locals with locals formed directly by the T.W.O.C. in areas where this was possible, and in other cases the U.T.W. locals were urged to reorganize under a new T.W.O.C. charter.<sup>35</sup> Within two years only a handful of locals chose to retain their U.T.W. charters; the others switched to a T.W.O.C. charter. Those that stayed under U.T.W. rules received the same assistance from the T.W.O.C. as did any other local,<sup>36</sup> but they paid a monthly per capita of only 40 cents whereas T.W.O.C. locals had to pay 50 cents.<sup>37</sup> Under the original T.W.O.C. policy, locals were to be formed only after the union succeeded in winning a contract from the mill. The prospective member paid no dues until then, but instead signed a "pledge card" designating the T.W.O.C. as his collective bargaining agent and empowering it to represent him. After the contract was signed, a regularly chartered local was set up. This method had the advantage of hastening recruiting and avoiding the numerous details and burdens of setting up a local, until the contract afforded a stable base for the new local.<sup>38</sup> Especially for Southern cotton mill workers, who had had some unfavorable experiences with unionism in the past, this system was very attractive. In effect, the union was saying "No dues until we deliver the goods in the form of a contract." Unfortunately, the resistance of many employers to the signing of a contract even after the T.W.O.C. had been designated as the collective bargaining agent by the NLRB forced a revision of this "no local until contract" policy. It was decided, therefore, that individual circumstances would be allowed to determine whether or not a local should be set up. Usually, the winning of an NLRB election and certification of the union as the sole

collective bargaining agent was followed by the chartering of a regular T.W.O.C. local.

With this organizational setup, the T.W.O.C. drive got under way. In its expressed determination to avoid the guerrilla strikes which had plagued the U.T.W. and in the bringing forward of unionism as the vehicle which would, by the standardization of labor conditions, help to stabilize this hitherto chaotic industry, the T.W.O.C. showed the strong influence of the needle trades unions on its theory and tactics. The familiar employer device of wage raises to forestall unionism was of little avail, and the first T.W.O.C. contract with a cotton mill was soon signed for the 750 employees of a Kentucky plant. This was followed by contracts with one of the largest thread mills of the country, which was located in New England, and with a large Alabama mill.<sup>39</sup> In spite of its efforts to avoid strikes, the union did undertake several strikes in the South which were necessary to win agreements and defeat employer tactics which sought to break up the local organizations less by direct attack than by procrastination in bargaining.<sup>40</sup> The resistance to collective bargaining and written agreements was very strong in the South, despite NLRB elections which had designated the T.W.O.C. as the choice of the majority of the employees. Nevertheless, in the first six months of its existence (March to August, 1937), the T.W.O.C. succeeded in winning agreements at 32 cotton mills in all sections of the country.<sup>41</sup> Employees in many more mills had chosen the T.W.O.C. as their bargaining agent by signing "pledge cards."<sup>42</sup>

Hardly had the campaign got into full swing, however, when economic circumstances put a damper on the rapid-fire type of drive that had been planned. In the fall of 1937 a recession began which lasted into the middle of 1938. The union staff was reduced, and for a period of three months each staff worker sacrificed one week's pay in each month to help the union.<sup>43</sup> One of the union's main problems was to fight off the wage cuts which had traditionally spiraled through the industry in previous depressions. In New England the union succeeded in staving off the cuts until December, 1937, when the New Bedford Textile Council, after closed negotiations with the mill owners, accepted a 12½ per cent wage cut in the hope of capturing orders for the New Bedford mills. This action on the part of the New Bedford Textile Council led to the expulsion of the Council and its constituent locals from the T.W.O.C. The essential question in this breach was that of the position of the Council within the T.W.O.C. It was the contention of the Council officers that the U.T.W.-T.W.O.C.



agreement obligated the T.W.O.C. to honor all U.T.W. contracts, including the loosely drawn guarantee of local autonomy which the Council had received when it entered the U.T.W. in 1928.<sup>44</sup> The T.W.O.C., on the other hand, could not afford to place the determination of policy affecting the entire cotton manufacturing industry in New England in the hands of a local group serving local interests only. The Council-U.T.W. agreement on autonomy could itself be interpreted to require national office approval, or certainly consultation, before the Council took the action which it did. The Council, furthermore, had agreed during negotiations not to take any decisive step without first discussing the matter with the T.W.O.C. national office, which the Council failed to do.<sup>45</sup>

Once the New Bedford wage cut was made, reductions became general throughout New England early in 1938, whereas in the South the presence of the T.W.O.C. held off the change for a few months.<sup>46</sup> Even in the face of these circumstances, the T.W.O.C. continued to win adherents and to pile up victories in NLRB elections in the South.<sup>47</sup> Though the conversion of these victories into contractual relations was more difficult than ever, the union did succeed in doing just this in several large Southern mills. In some cases renewals of contracts originally signed in 1937 were secured only after strikes were called.<sup>48</sup>

The improvement in economic conditions, which began in the fall of 1938, smoothed the path of the T.W.O.C. to new successes in NLRB elections and to new contracts.<sup>49</sup> By the end of the year the union was in a position to look forward to replacing the U.T.W.-T.W.O.C. team by a single organization. The official T.W.O.C. monthly newspaper, *Textile Labor*, was started in February, 1939, and became the main source of information about union activities and union policies.

Meanwhile, however, a discordant note blared forth from Rhode Island.<sup>50</sup> Joseph Sylvia, who had been active in the old Woolen and Worsted Federation of the U.T.W. and had been taken into the T.W.O.C. staff in March, 1937, found himself, a year later, at odds with the national office over questions of policy and organization. Sylvia and his group contended that the T.W.O.C. had no power to disregard the federations which had been formed under the U.T.W. and that, therefore, the Woolen and Worsted Federation still existed with all the rights and autonomy which the federations had enjoyed under the U.T.W. constitution. Francis Gorman, who was president of the U.T.W., and became a member of the T.W.O.C. when he was

named to the post by John L. Lewis, was relegated to a secondary position in the T.W.O.C. campaign, first when Sidney Hillman was appointed chairman of the T.W.O.C. and, second, when Emil Rieve became executive director of the T.W.O.C. after Hillman's illness in the fall of 1937. Chafing under this role, Gorman believed he had found in the Sylvia-T.W.O.C. break an opportunity to rally a group which would be able to revive the U.T.W. as an independent entity separate from the T.W.O.C. by repudiating the U.T.W.-T.W.O.C. agreement. It is also probable that Gorman hoped that by joining the Sylvia opposition he might be able to bargain himself into a better position within the T.W.O.C. Joining forces with Sylvia, Gorman found himself on the losing side of a battle to regain the U.T.W. funds which had been turned over to the T.W.O.C. Rebuffed on this front, the dissident group found refuge in the A.F. of L. In January, 1939, the U.T.W. Executive Council members who had remained with the T.W.O.C. took action and ousted Gorman from the U.T.W. presidency.

This episode closed, plans were made for a new union which would take over the U.T.W. and T.W.O.C. organizations. In May, 1939, the U.T.W.-C.I.O. and the T.W.O.C. met briefly in separate conventions, and both adopted a consolidation plan. By this plan the 302 locals which the T.W.O.C. had set up in all branches of the textile industry were to surrender their T.W.O.C. charters and affiliate with the U.T.W.-C.I.O., which had 126 locals at this time. All properties, contracts, etc., of the T.W.O.C. were turned over to the U.T.W.-C.I.O. Following these short formalities, over 600 delegates met in joint session, adopted the name "Textile Workers Union of America," and launched the new union with Emil Rieve as president. Looking back over the two years which had elapsed since the U.T.W.-T.W.O.C. agreement had been signed, the new union found itself with 858 collective bargaining contracts covering 235,000 workers in mills in all branches of the textile industry. Over \$2,000,000 had been spent in the two-year campaign. Some \$300,000 had been spent by other unions aiding the drive (exclusive of direct contributions or loans), while the T.W.O.C. had expended the rest. Of more than \$1,750,000 spent directly by the T.W.O.C., over \$500,000 had been contributed by the A.C.W., almost \$200,000 came from the U.M.W.A., \$110,000 from the I.L.G.W.U., and \$85,000 from the C.I.O. proper. From its own locals the T.W.O.C. had collected nearly \$500,000 for organizing work—which was the major part of the moneys coming from textile

labor sources. The union was not yet self-supporting, but it was expected that soon it would be able to stand on its own financial feet.<sup>51</sup>

The two years following the founding convention of 1939 displayed a varying pattern of progress. In New England the campaign in cotton textiles took on greater impetus, while in the South, though important new contracts were secured, the first flush of victory was followed by continuing efforts to stabilize its gains and extend its activities into areas more difficult to organize. Financially the T.W.U.A. achieved its immediate goal, for by the time of the second convention in May, 1941, the union had become self-supporting. On the political front the T.W.U.A. followed the lead of the A.C.W. and the right wing of the C.I.O. by supporting Franklin D. Roosevelt for re-election in 1940, and in its relations with Labor's Nonpartisan League. In the legislative field the union continued its support of the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 and was active in the industry committees for cotton textiles which recommended higher minimum wage rates than those set by the statute alone. The Public Contracts Act of 1936 also received the approval of the T.W.U.A., which was successful in having the full penalties of the act imposed upon a cotton mill which consistently violated the law. The union combated the efforts to weaken the National Labor Relations Act via the amendment route, and also opposed all "antisabotage" legislation which would have limited the right to strike and picket, freeze wages, and in other ways put restrictions upon legitimate union activities. The T.W.U.A. threw its full support behind the defense program and its president, Emil Rieve, was appointed to the National Defense Mediation Board and to the labor policy committee of the National Defense Advisory Commission. T.W.U.A. officials have accepted appointments in various governmental bodies relating to safety, national defense, wages, housing, unemployment insurance, social security, and similar problems. For its own membership the union undertook a variety of recreational-educational activities along the lines which had been pioneered by the needle trades unions. Ladies' Auxiliaries to run parties and banquets; the Junior Union, with hiking, picnics, dramatics, and discussions to acquaint the children with the union and its role in the economic and social life of the nation; ball teams and summer institutes; and a library of educational and documentary films such as *The People of the Cumberland* which, together with a union-owned projector, are available for local use; all serve to make the union a part of every aspect of the workers' lives. Administrative co-ordination, which in the earlier period of the union was secured

by "industry conferences," was now further aided by regional and state conferences. The Atlanta conference, for example, was attended by about 500 delegates from this region, and smaller state and staff conferences have been held at frequent intervals.<sup>52</sup>

So far as actual membership among cotton mill workers is concerned, there are few barometers. No figures pertaining to membership in cotton mills as distinct from the textile industry as a whole have ever been issued. The general statements pertaining to membership in all branches of the textile industry have been more of the publicity type than actual counts, and have ranged upward to over 450,000.<sup>53</sup> As of May 31, 1941, in the Southern section of cotton textiles the T.W.U.A. had won NLRB elections in 46 mills employing over 32,000 workers, while in the North the union was victorious in 12 elections covering over 14,000 workers. (The union had lost at only 9 mills in the South, and 2 in the North.) In addition, the union was certified without elections at three Northern mills and at five Southern mills. In the 15 Northern mills at which the T.W.U.A. won the bargaining rights either by election or certification without election, contracts were secured at 13 of the mills, no contract was ever secured at one mill, while at another mill the election victory took place just before May 31st, so that no contract had been negotiated before this tabulation date. Of the 13 contracts at these Northern mills which were involved in NLRB proceedings, 10 were still in effect on May 31, 1941, one had expired without renewal, and two of the mills had been lost to other organizations (one to an independent union, and one to the U.T.W.-A.F. of L.). In the South, on the other hand, the T.W.U.A. found it more difficult to secure and retain contracts. Of the 51 Southern mills at which the union had won the bargaining rights by either election or certification by May 31, 1941, contracts were secured in 29 cases while in 22 cases the union was unable to capitalize on its victory. Of the 29 contracts negotiated, 16 were still effective on May 31, 1941, 12 had expired without renewal, and one mill had been lost to an A.F. of L. union.<sup>54</sup>

In addition to the contracts at mills which were involved in NLRB representation cases, the T.W.U.A. has secured many contracts in the North and a few in the South without the necessity of bringing action before the NLRB. As matters stood in May 31, 1941, the T.W.U.A. had 23 active contracts covering over 17,000 workers in the Southern cotton textile industry, and 33 active contracts in the North covering over 26,000 workers. In the South only 7 of the 23 contracts had been secured without NLRB election or certification,

while 22 NLRB victories had not resulted in a contract at any time before May 31, 1941. In the North, on the other hand, 23 of the 33 contracts were at mills not involved in NLRB representation cases. This North-South contrast indicates that in the Southern section of the industry, which is most important to the success of the T.W.U.A. in its campaign to organize cotton textiles, the antiunion tradition of the employers has scarcely abated. In several cases more than two years of negotiations had failed to result in an agreement, and the NLRB had to order the mills to bargain in good faith instead of systematically rejecting every union proposal without making counter-proposals, and to refrain from setting arbitrary and unwarranted limits on the negotiations. In March, 1941, the T.W.U.A. finally succeeded in getting a signed agreement at a mill in which the workers had elected the union as their bargaining agent in June, 1938. During the almost three-year interval which elapsed between the election victory and the contract the employer had used every possible dilatory tactic in an attempt to dissipate the union's strength and discourage the membership. Another mill signed a contract in November, 1940, more than three years after the T.W.U.A. won an NLRB election.

An analysis of the contracts which were active on May 31, 1941, further illustrates the North-South contrast. In the 33 contracts covering Northern mills there were 16 with a closed-shop provision and another 7 which had some modification of the closed or preferred shop, while 12 had a provision for the checkoff of union dues. In the 23 contracts covering Southern mills only one had a closed-shop clause and 12 provided for the dues checkoff. The principal difference which reflects upon and influences union strength is that relating to the requirement of union membership as a condition of employment. The contracts for the Northern mills gave the union far more control over the job than did the Southern mill contracts.<sup>55</sup>

Just as the Southern employer has resisted the union through protracted and delaying tactics during negotiations where the union has won the bargaining rights through an NLRB election, and has resisted union attempts to include job control provisions in the contracts which were finally signed, so have the employers attempted to choke off union strength at the source by discrimination against union members in violation of the NLRA. In the North the T.W.U.A., before May 31, 1941, brought before the NLRB but one complaint of antiunion activity against a cotton mill, whereas in the South there were two dozen such cases. The union won its case in the single Northern mill, and in the South 20 of the 24 cases were decided for

the T.W.U.A. In 15 of these 20 victories over Southern mill owners the NLRB order called for the reinstatement of workers who had been discharged for union membership, in addition to the usual NLRB requirement that the employer refrain from antiunion activities, disestablish company unions where they had been formed, etc. The continuance of employer opposition to the right of the worker to join the union is indicated by the filing of additional complaints of antiunion activity against employers who have already been ordered by the NLRB to desist from such activity or after the union has won an NLRB election.<sup>56</sup>

Putting together the above material on contracts and elections as a basis for estimating T.W.U.A. membership among cotton mill workers as of May 31, 1941, it is probable that as of this date the T.W.U.A. had approximately 55,000 cotton mill workers in its ranks four years after the C.I.O. textile drive started on its way. The following years saw an acceleration of T.W.U.A. progress in New England and a continuation of the slower uphill fight in the South.<sup>57</sup> The only real rivals of the T.W.U.A. in New England were the A.F.T.O., with its stronghold in Fall River, and the revived U.T.W.-A.F. of L., which dominated New Bedford. In mid-1942, however, the T.W.U.A. moved into Fall River and won NLRB elections in nine mills, whereupon the remaining A.F.T.O. Fall River locals took refuge in the U.T.W.-A.F. of L. and the latter was successful in elections in two cotton mills of the city.<sup>58</sup> In March, 1943, the T.W.U.A. achieved a virtual monopoly of the union picture in New England when it won NLRB elections in ten New Bedford cotton mills, and thus left the U.T.W.-A.F. of L. with but one of the city's fine goods cotton mills.<sup>59</sup>

The T.W.U.A. also dominates the union picture in the South, though the extent of organization here is far below that of New England. In June, 1942, the T.W.U.A. scored a notable victory in this area when it won an election at the Riverside and Dan River Cotton Mills, employing over 13,000 workers—the locale of the disastrous U.T.W. defeat in 1931. The T.W.U.A. has further strengthened its position in the South since May, 1941, by securing more favorable contracts in regard to union job control. New contracts and renewals since that date have shown an increase in provisions for dues check-offs, the preferential shop, and maintenance of membership clauses.<sup>60</sup> By the end of 1943, the T.W.U.A. was the sole collective bargaining agent for about 131,000 cotton mill workers in the country—121,000 of these workers were in mills under T.W.U.A. contracts,<sup>61</sup> while

the remainder were in mills at which the union had recently won elections but contracts had not yet been signed.

Compared with approximately 20,000 cotton mill workers in the old U.T.W. before the T.W.O.C. took over, the new union has made good, but not spectacular, progress. In the South, by the end of 1939, there were indications (such as a falling off in the number of NLRB elections held) that the union had reached the end of the more readily organizable sections of this traditionally difficult territory. The active contracts for mills in this area and the NLRB election victories provide a base for further activity, but much remains to be done. The barriers of poverty, employer hostility, mill-owned villages, local government support of the mill owners, the threat of K.K.K. activity against the T.W.U.A., and the opposition of itinerant preachers confront the union on every hand. Whether the T.W.U.A. will be able to break through these barriers and organize a substantial proportion of the workers remains to be seen. Past experience has demonstrated that the organization of the South is the key to the organization of the entire cotton manufacturing industry in this country, not only by reason of the concentration of most of the industry in this section, but also because of the psychological advantage which the conquest of this traditionally nonunion area would give the union in its efforts in other parts of the country. If the T.W.U.A. fails in the Southern cotton mills it cannot really succeed elsewhere.

Even before the formal expulsion of the U.T.W. from the A.F. of L. in 1938, the A.F. of L. started to organize federal labor unions in textiles.<sup>62</sup> These federal labor unions were directly under the control of the A.F. of L., and this status was temporary pending the revocation of the U.T.W. charter and the organization of a new A.F. of L. affiliate for the textile industry. By August, 1937, the A.F. of L. claimed over 6,000 members enrolled in such local unions, but there was no indication of which branch of the textile industry was affected, though the majority of the units were in the South.<sup>63</sup> In spite of pronouncements about campaigns to win the textile workers to the A.F. of L.,<sup>64</sup> it was admitted that the A.F. of L. activity in this line was of a passive nature; the A.F. of L. acquiring members only when a group of workers actually came to the Federation seeking admission.<sup>65</sup> In August, 1938, the A.F. of L. organized the National Council of Textile Unions, with New England and Southern divisions, to co-ordinate the work of the local unions which had been set up.<sup>66</sup> In early 1939 the A.F. of L. claimed to have enrolled 40,000 textile

workers in 80 to 100 local unions and plans were being made for the formation of a national union in this field.<sup>67</sup>

In December, 1938, the Sylvia-Gorman group, which claimed to be the legitimate continuation of the old U.T.W., held a convention in Providence, R.I. This convention was attended by delegates from nine local unions, the minimum number required by the U.T.W. constitution for the holding of its convention.<sup>68</sup> This convention decided to ask the A.F. of L. for a reinvestment of the U.T.W. charter.<sup>69</sup> In January, 1939, representatives of this group met in Washington with officials of the A.F. of L.<sup>70</sup> Since the A.F. of L. was supplying the financial support, Secretary Morrison of the A.F. of L. was made secretary-treasurer of the U.T.W.-A.F. of L. until a more formal reorganization was achieved.<sup>71</sup> In the following month the Executive Council of the A.F. of L. authorized President Green to restore the U.T.W. charter to the locals headed by Francis J. Gorman who, since his parting of the ways with the T.W.O.C., had claimed the U.T.W. presidency.<sup>72</sup> In May, 1939, the U.T.W.-A.F. of L. met in convention, elected Council M. Fox of Georgia as president, and was formally reinvested with its charter by the A.F. of L. Gorman's continuation in the presidency at this time was opposed by A.F. of L. officials, and instead he was elected chairman of the Executive Council, a post created by the convention.<sup>73</sup>

The membership of the reinstated union was small. One vice-president of the U.T.W.-A.F. of L. estimated the membership at 1,500 when the charter was restored.<sup>74</sup> Though the U.T.W. became a full-fledged A.F. of L. affiliate again in May, 1939, it was not until January, 1940, that it was able to open a national office; and at the time of the December, 1941, convention it was still financially dependent upon the A.F. of L.<sup>75</sup> In March, 1941, the U.T.W. secured the affiliation of the unions of the New Bedford Textile Council,<sup>76</sup> which had parted from the T.W.O.C. in 1938. This development was not unexpected, since officers of the Council had been in close contact with the Gorman group even before the A.F. of L. restored the U.T.W. charter.<sup>77</sup> Before the New Bedford Textile Council re-entered the U.T.W., however, it was attacked by the U.T.W., which accused the Council leaders of a penchant for "back-door" parleys with the mill owners which foreclosed the workers from participation in decisions which determined working conditions. The U.T.W. declared that it was this craft union leadership which was the obstacle to effective organization in New Bedford, and the U.T.W. launched a membership drive in New Bedford.<sup>78</sup> Not long after, the unions of the New Bed-



ford Textile Council re-entered the U.T.W. on the same basis of autonomy as had existed before the coming of the C.I.O.<sup>79</sup>

The U.T.W. continued the federation system which was developing before the T.W.O.C. was formed. The centrifugal tendencies of the federation system were not abated, and continued to be a source of complaint by the U.T.W. president at the 1941 convention,<sup>80</sup> as it had been before the T.W.O.C. abolished the federations. This convention again revised the federation setup, this time providing for five federations. Steps to control the federations were also taken by eliminating the payment of the per capita through the federations. Instead, the locals will pay the per capita directly to the national office.<sup>81</sup> This increases the power of the national office because it can now withhold funds necessary to the operation of the federations. It is, therefore, theoretically possible for the national union to control the federations unless the locals are willing themselves to support the federations without any rebate of their per capita from the national office to the federations.

Up to September 30, 1942, the U.T.W. had won the bargaining rights in nine Southern cotton mills employing a total of almost 6,000 workers, had lost elections in four mills where it was unopposed, and had unsuccessfully opposed the T.W.U.A. in three other mills. As of September 30, 1942, the U.T.W. had brought before the NLRB four cases of antiunion activity by the employers at Southern mills, and the union's allegations were upheld by the board in each case. (It should be noted that some of the NLRB proceedings here attributed to the U.T.W. were originally undertaken by A.F. of L. federal locals, but they are being credited to the U.T.W. because in the normal course of events these federal locals go into the U.T.W.) In the North the U.T.W. brought no complaints of antiunion activity before the NLRB up to September 30, 1942, and up to that time had won the bargaining rights in elections at three mills employing some 2,800 workers.<sup>82</sup> In March, 1941, the U.T.W. added to its membership rolls when it secured the affiliation of the unions of the New Bedford Textile Council. Following its break with the T.W.O.C., the New Bedford Textile Council negotiated a written agreement with the New Bedford Cotton Manufacturers' Association,<sup>83</sup> which represented most of the mills in this city. The T.W.U.A. was unable to make much headway in New Bedford at first (aside from a contract at one of the mills), and in January, 1941, the New Bedford Textile Council entered a further agreement with the manufacturers for two years.<sup>84</sup>

In March, 1943, however, the T.W.U.A. captured this U.T.W. stronghold, as noted above.

While the U.T.W. still had control of New Bedford, its total cotton mill worker representation in the country was probably 20,000. With the loss of the New Bedford mills the U.T.W. cotton mill worker representation was probably 10,000. There has been no evidence of any concerted large-scale organization drive by the U.T.W., in spite of publicity releases to this effect.<sup>85</sup> The U.T.W. obviously has no funds for such an effort, and has not been successful in securing A.F. of L. support to this end.<sup>86</sup>

It is not to the credit of the A.F. of L. that it has injected the false issue of communism into its activities in the textile field, particularly in its efforts to win the Southern workers.<sup>87</sup> The 1929-1931 failure in the South showed that the A.F. of L. is no more beloved by the mill owners than any other union and that the A.F. of L. members were treated no more tenderly than those of the N.T.W.U. The 1929-1931 campaign of the A.F. of L., based on an appeal to the employers on the anti-Communist issue, brought the old U.T.W. no gains and the attempt to pin a "red" label on the T.W.U.A. will net the new U.T.W. nothing, for the label has no backing and will not stick.

Of the independent unions in the cotton textile industry there is little to say. The American Federation of Textile Operatives, it will be remembered, was formed in 1916 after a split from the U.T.W. and had its strongholds in Fall River, New Bedford, and Salem, Mass., until it was weakened by the secession of the Salem local to the U.T.W. in 1925 and the loss of the New Bedford locals to the U.T.W. in 1928. After this the A.F.T.O. membership was practically confined to Fall River, and in 1934 the U.T.W. claimed that the A.F.T.O. had no more than 2,000 members left. The A.F.T.O. held no conventions from 1932 to 1936, but the 1937 and 1938 conventions indicate a membership of about 3,000 in those years.<sup>88</sup> Since then the A.F.T.O. managed to win one NLRB election in western Massachusetts,<sup>89</sup> but wilted badly in the face of the T.W.U.A. campaign in other areas. At one Connecticut mill the A.F.T.O. local went over to the U.T.W., but shortly thereafter the T.W.U.A. won the bargaining rights in the NLRB election. At another mill in the same state the A.F.T.O. local voted, in September, 1942, to go over to the T.W.U.A.<sup>90</sup> In Fall River, which had always been the center and stronghold of A.F.T.O. activity, the T.W.U.A. moved in to win NLRB elections in nine mills, and the A.F.T.O. collapsed when its locals in this city went into the U.T.W.

At Salem, Mass., the Independent Sheet Metal Workers Union, which had been a U.T.W. local up to 1933 and then became an independent union, lost an NLRB election to the T.W.U.A. In two other New England mills, employing a total of about 2,700 workers, independent unions have won NLRB elections and therefore hold the bargaining rights for those workers.<sup>91</sup>

There have been other indications of the existence of small independent unions in the Northern section of the industry, but none of much importance or membership.<sup>92</sup> The Independent Textile Union of Woonsocket, R.I., which had a small cotton mill membership in 1936, lost the bulk of this when the local concerned decided to withdraw from the I.T.U. in 1938.<sup>93</sup>

In the South, independent unions have been rare. There may have been a few during the First World War period,<sup>94</sup> and some short-lived and rather informal groups sprang up in 1930-1932.<sup>95</sup> Under the Textile Labor Relations Board regime, just before the NIRA was invalidated; there was an occasional independent union victory recorded,<sup>96</sup> but there is no indication of anything but a short life for even the victor. Since the NLRB came into existence there have been further notices of independent union activity in the South, but none of them has had more than a nuisance value.<sup>97</sup>

Looking at the unions in cotton manufacturing today, we may note certain differences from the pre-C.I.O. era. In the first place, cotton mill unionism has passed the 1920 peak in bare terms of membership. About 145,000 workers are represented by one or another of the unions in the field—about 131,000 by the T.W.U.A. (C.I.O.), some 10,000 by the U.T.W. (A.F. of L.), and the remainder by independent unions—compared to 110,000 in 1920. More important, however, is the different character of today's unionism. The 1920 union membership had little in the way of contractual relations with the mills. Today's membership is not only larger than that of 1920, it is also buttressed by union agreements to an extent not even dreamed of in 1920.

In the election and certification processes and the protection of labor's right to organize under the terms of the NLRA, the unions have an unequalled opportunity to extend their organization while avoiding the guerrilla warfare which has previously characterized union-employer relations in this industry. The present membership, unlike that of previous periods and that of the 1920 peak, has not been garnered through strikes and turmoil and it may be expected that the large turnover in union membership, which has marked the union history of the industry, will be greatly reduced. Thus, cotton

mill unionism may acquire a permanency which it has heretofore lacked. Much, of course, remains in the hands of the employers. So far they have shown (especially in the South) little disposition to accept unionism or to acknowledge that the right to join unions is part and parcel of the democratic way of life.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER

- <sup>1</sup> Rhyne, *op. cit.*, p. 206.
- <sup>2</sup> Broadus Mitchell, *A Survey of Industry*, in Couch, *op. cit.*, p. 90.
- <sup>3</sup> Mark Ethridge, "The South's New Industrialism and the Press," *The Annals*, January, 1931, pp. 251-6.
- <sup>4</sup> *The South's Development*, *op. cit.*, p. 100.
- <sup>5</sup> *Textile Worker*, *op. cit.*, April 1, 1929, pp. 38-9.
- <sup>6</sup> Tippet, *op. cit.*, pp. 248.
- <sup>7</sup> Coleman, *op. cit.*, p. 185.
- <sup>8</sup> *The Industrial Revolution in the South*, *op. cit.*, p. 17; Brunner, *op. cit.*, pp. 123, 165-8.
- <sup>9</sup> De Vyver, *op. cit.*, pp. 466-8.
- <sup>10</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 364-7.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 172-5.
- <sup>12</sup> *Report of the Proceedings of the Fifty-Fifth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor*, 1935, pp. 758-76.
- <sup>13</sup> Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 381-4.
- <sup>14</sup> U.T.W., *Proceedings*, *op. cit.*, 1936, pp. 49-67.
- <sup>15</sup> *Textile Worker*, *op. cit.*, December 21, 1935, p. 4.
- <sup>16</sup> *Report of the Proceedings of the Fifty-Fourth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor*, 1934, p. 598; *Report of the Proceedings of the Fifty-Fifth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor*, 1935, pp. 265, 522, 575.
- <sup>17</sup> *Textile Worker*, *op. cit.*, December 21, 1935, p. 3.
- <sup>18</sup> *Union News Service*, *op. cit.*, March 2, 1936, July 13, 1936, August 10, 1936, September 14, 1936, October 5, 1936, October 19, 1936.
- <sup>19</sup> *Textile Worker*, *op. cit.*, July 4, 1936, pp. 3, 8.
- <sup>20</sup> U.T.W. *Proceedings*, *op. cit.*, 1936, pp. 49-67, 88-9.
- <sup>21</sup> *Textile Worker*, *op. cit.*, February 13, 1937, p. 1.
- <sup>22</sup> *Union News Service*, *op. cit.*, February 8, 1937, p. 8.
- <sup>23</sup> *Textile Worker*, *op. cit.*, July 4, 1936, p. 8.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, August 15, 1936, p. 4.
- <sup>25</sup> *Union News Service*, *op. cit.*, December 28, 1936.
- <sup>26</sup> *Textile Worker*, *op. cit.*, February 13, 1937, p. 1; *Building A Union of Textile Workers*, *op. cit.*, p. 10-11.
- <sup>27</sup> The text of the agreement is found in *Building a Union of Textile Workers*, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11, and in *Union News Service*, *op. cit.*, March 15, 1937.
- <sup>28</sup> *Building a Union of Textile Workers*, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.
- <sup>29</sup> *Union News Service*, *op. cit.*, March 22, 1937.
- <sup>30</sup> *Building a Union of Textile Workers*, *op. cit.*, p. 14.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62-3.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 55-6.
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 67-8.
- <sup>35</sup> *National News Letter*, *op. cit.*, April 7, 1937, June 1, 1937; *Textile Workers Organizing Committee*, C.I.O., press release, April 9, 1937.
- <sup>36</sup> *Building a Union of Textile Workers*, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>37</sup> U.T.W., *Constitution and By-Laws*, op. cit., Article VIII, Section 2; Textile Workers Organizing Committee, *Rules and Regulations Covering the Organization and Conduct of Local Unions and Joint Boards of the Textile Workers Organizing Committee of the C.I.O.*, Article VI, Section 1.

<sup>38</sup> *Building a Union of Textile Workers*, op. cit., pp. 15, 57.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>41</sup> Contract files of T.W.O.C.; *National News Letter*, op. cit., various issues.

<sup>42</sup> *Building a Union of Textile Workers*, op. cit., p. 23.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 66.

<sup>44</sup> The text of this agreement is found in U.T.W., *Proceedings*, 1928, p. 37.

<sup>45</sup> This account of the New Bedford incident is taken from interviews of this author with officials of the New Bedford Textile Council, New Bedford officials of the T.W.O.C., and *Building a Union of Textile Workers*, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>46</sup> *Building a Union of Textile Workers*, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>47</sup> N.L.R.B., *Decisions and Orders*, op. cit., passim, press releases, passim.

<sup>48</sup> *Building a Union of Textile Workers*, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>49</sup> N.L.R.B., *Decisions and Orders*, op. cit., passim, press releases, passim; T.W.O.C. contract files; *National News Letter*, op. cit., various issues.

<sup>50</sup> This account of the Sylvia affair is taken from an interview of this author with Francis Gorman and *Building a Union of Textile Workers*, op. cit., pp. 68-9.

<sup>51</sup> *Building a Union of Textile Workers*, op. cit., pp. 38, 64-66; United Textile Workers of America (C.I.O.), *Proceedings*, 1939, pp. 205-6; Textile Workers Union of America, C.I.O., *Proceedings*, 1939, pp. 18, 147, 150.

<sup>52</sup> Textile Workers Union of America, C.I.O., *Executive Council Report to the Second Biennial Convention*, 1941, passim.

<sup>53</sup> *New York Post*, December 14, 1938; Congress of Industrial Organizations, *The C.I.O. News*, November 25, 1941, Section B, p. 5.

<sup>54</sup> N.L.R.B., *Decisions and Orders*, op. cit., passim, press releases, passim, T.W.U.A. contract files.

<sup>55</sup> T.W.U.A. contract files.

<sup>56</sup> N.L.R.B., *Decisions and Orders*, op. cit., passim, press releases, passim.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*; *Textile Labor*, op. cit., various issues.

<sup>58</sup> N.L.R.B., press release 5438, August 4, 1942; *Textile Labor*, op. cit., October, 1942, p. 1; *Textile Worker*, op. cit., August, 1942, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup> *Textile Labor*, op. cit., April, 1943, pp. 1-2.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, various issues.

<sup>61</sup> Based on information supplied to this author by Solomon Barkin, Director of Research for the T.W.U.A., and various issues of *Textile Labor*.

<sup>62</sup> *Report of the Proceedings of the Fifty-Eighth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor*, 1938, pp. 57, 84.

<sup>63</sup> *The New York Times*, August 28, 1937.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, May 14, 1937, August 2, 1937.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, August 8, 1937.

<sup>66</sup> American Federation of Labor, Information and Publicity Service, press release, August 19, 1938.

<sup>67</sup> *The New York Times*, January 23, 1939, January 30, 1939, February 4, 1939.

<sup>68</sup> U.T.W., *Constitution and By-Laws*, op. cit., Article X, Section 1; United Textile Workers of America, A.F. of L., *Special Convention Proceedings*, 1939 (condensed version), p. 6, 7.

<sup>69</sup> U.T.W.-A.F. of L., *Special Convention Proceedings*, 1939 (condensed version), p. 7.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>72</sup> *The New York Times*, February 4, 1939.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, May 11, 1939; U.T.W.-A.F. of L., *Special Convention Proceedings*, 1939

(condensed version), *passim*; The Bureau of National Affairs, Inc., *Labor Relations Reporter*, May 15, 1939, p. 5.

<sup>74</sup> U.T.W.-A.F. of L., *Special Convention Proceedings*, 1941 (condensed version), p. 77.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 26.

<sup>76</sup> *Textile Worker*, *op. cit.*, May, 1941, p. 1; letter to this author from William E. G. Batty of the New Bedford Textile Council, July 9, 1941.

<sup>77</sup> U.T.W.-A.F. of L., *Special Convention Proceedings*, 1939 (condensed version), p. 10.

<sup>78</sup> *Textile Worker*, *op. cit.*, October, 1940, pp. 2-3.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, May, 1941, p. 1.

<sup>80</sup> U.T.W.-A.F. of L., *Special Convention Proceedings*, 1941 (condensed version), pp. 20, 29-30.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 100-2.

<sup>82</sup> N.L.R.B. *Decisions and Orders*, *op. cit.*, *passim*, press releases, *passim*.

<sup>83</sup> *The Morning Mercury* (New Bedford, Mass.), May 6, 1938.

<sup>84</sup> *Sunday Standard-Times* (New Bedford, Mass.), January 26, 1941, Section 4.

<sup>85</sup> *The New York Times*, November 7, 1939, February 7, 1940, March 4, 1940; *New York Post*, February 4, 1939.

<sup>86</sup> *Report of the Proceedings of the Fifty-Ninth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Labor*, 1939, p. 330.

<sup>87</sup> *The New York Times*, March 30, 1937, May 14, 1937, August 22, 1937.

<sup>88</sup> *Proceedings of the Seventeenth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Textile Operatives*, 1937, p. 5; *Proceedings of the Eighteenth Annual Convention of the American Federation of Textile Operatives*, 1938, p. 5.

<sup>89</sup> Letter to this author from the NLRB, July 6, 1942.

<sup>90</sup> *Textile Labor*, *op. cit.*, October, 1942, p. 1.

<sup>91</sup> 10 N.L.R.B. 26; NLRB, press releases, 1450, January 10, 1940, 5037, October 13, 1942.

<sup>92</sup> *Daily Progress Reports*, *op. cit.*, October 26, 1938; *Labor Relations Reporter*, *op. cit.*, April 20, 1942, pp. 275-6.

<sup>93</sup> *Daily Progress Reports*, *op. cit.*, October 27, 1938.

<sup>94</sup> McCracken, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

<sup>95</sup> George Sinclair Mitchell, *Labor Disputes and Organization*, in Couch, *op. cit.*, p. 639.

<sup>96</sup> Textile Labor Relations Board, press release 152, Case 3.

<sup>97</sup> *Daily Progress Reports*, *op. cit.*, August 13, 1937; NLRB, *Decisions and Orders*, *op. cit.*, *passim*, press releases, *passim*.

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## BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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ALTHOUGH the cotton textile industry is among the nation's largest manufacturing industries in the number of wage earners, there are few sources to which one can look for a rounded comprehensive history of the development of the industry against which to set the story of the cotton mill workers. A first guide to the literature of the industry is the publication of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, *Economic Development of the Cotton-Textile Industry in the United States, 1910-1935*, Agricultural Economics Bibliography No. 57, Washington, September, 1935, which lists over 400 items relating to all aspects of the industry and carries a short paragraph or two outlining the contents of each work listed. The publications listed below are not intended as an exhaustive blueprint of the sources, but are rather suggestions of the items which will provide a general picture of the industry and its workers. Those who are interested in the detailed story on particular matters covered in this volume are referred to the bibliography which is contained in the notes at the end of each chapter.

The basic statistical data on the development of the industry are found in the various publications of the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, which issued the *Census of Manufactures* every five years up to 1919, and every two years since then. The early days of the industry are chronicled in Victor S. Clark, *History of Manufactures in the United States*, published for the Carnegie Institution of Washington, D.C., by McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., New York, 1929 Edition. A general survey of the industry up to about 1910 is found in Melvin Thomas Copeland, *The Cotton Manufacturing Industry of the United States*, Harvard University, Cambridge, 1912, and in Herbert Jay Lahne, *Labor in the Cotton Mill, 1865-1900*, M.A. Thesis in Burgess Library, Columbia University. The financial aspects of the industry are treated in detail in the excellent volume by Stephen Jay Kennedy, *Profits and Losses in Textiles*, Harper & Brothers, New

York and London, 1936, and this work also contains good incidental material on other aspects of the industry.

The leading work on the development of the Southern section of the industry up to about the end of the first decade of the present century is Broadus Mitchell, *The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South*, Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1921, supplemented by Holland Thompson, *From the Cotton Field to the Cotton Mill*, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1906. The later Southern industry is covered in Ben F. Lemert, *The Cotton Textile Industry of the Southern Appalachian Piedmont*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1933, and a parallel volume on the New England area is J. Herbert Burgy, *The New England Cotton Textile Industry*, Waverly Press, Baltimore, 1932.

The industry's practices and problems (except labor) are set forth in two government publications covering the last two or three decades of the industry's history: Cabinet Committee, *Cotton Textile Industry*, 74th Congress, 1st Session, Senate, Document No. 126, Washington, 1935, and U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Wages in Cotton-Goods Manufacturing*, Bulletin No. 663, Washington, 1938. Further material is provided in the reports of the industry committees set up under the Fair Labor Standards Act: *Report and Recommendation of Industry Committee No. 1 for the Textile Industry to the Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division of the United States Department of Labor*, May, 1939; and *Statement of the Minority of Industry Committee No. 1 Submitted to the Administrator of the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938*.

The most important sources of information on the composition of the labor force before 1910 are the *Reports of the Immigration Commission*, 61st Congress, 2d Session, Senate Document No. 633, Vol. 10, *Immigrants and Industries*, Part 3, *Cotton Goods Manufacturing in the North Atlantic States*; and *Report on Condition of Women and Child Wage-Earners in the United States*, 61st Congress, 2d Session, Senate Document No. 645, Vol. I, *Cotton Textile Industry*, and Vol. IX, *History of Women in Industry in the United States*. Additional data are found in Holland Thompson, *op. cit.*; Broadus Mitchell, *op. cit.*; and in the works of Edith Abbott, *Women in Industry*, D. Appleton & Co., New York, 1910, and "History of the Employment of Women in American Cotton Mills," *Journal of Political Economy*, November, 1908, and January, 1909. The statistical material on nativity, sex, age, and marital status of the workers is found in the various volumes of the *Census of Manufactures*, *op. cit.*; and the decennial *Census of Population*, issued by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the



Census. There are several studies covering the socio-economic status of the Southern mill workers since the First World War. Principal among these are Lois MacDonald, *Southern Mill Hills*, Alex L. Hillman, New York, 1928; Myra Page, *Southern Cotton Mills and Labor*, Workers Library Publishers, New York, 1929; M. A. Potwin, *Cotton Mill People of the Piedmont*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1927; and Jennings J. Rhyne, *Some Southern Cotton Mill Workers and Their Villages*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1930.

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The history of the New England mill village is given in Lahne, *op. cit.*; the *Report of the Industrial Commission*, 56th Congress, 1st Session, House of Representatives Document 476, Part 2; U.S. Senate, Committee on Education and Labor, *Report on Relations Between Capital and Labor*, 1885; "People of a New England Factory Village," *Atlantic Monthly*, October, 1880; C. B. Spahr, "The Old Factory Towns in New England," *The Outlook*, February, 1899; and Harriet H. Robinson, *Loom and Spindle*, Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., New York and Boston, 1898. The early development of the Southern mill village is covered in Broadus Mitchell, *op. cit.*; Holland Thompson,

*op. cit.*; and in *Report on Condition of Women and Child Wage-Earners in the United States, op. cit.*, Vol. I, *Cotton Textile Industry*. The Southern mill village since 1900 is described in numerous works, principally MacDonald, *op. cit.*; Rhyne, *op. cit.*; Page, *op. cit.*; Potwin, *op. cit.*; Abraham Berglund, George T. Starnes, and Frank T. DeVwyer, *Labor in the Industrial South*, Institute for Research in the Social Sciences, Institute Monograph No. 9, University of Virginia, 1930; U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Housing by Employers in the United States*, Bulletin No. 263, Washington, 1920; and Harriet L. Herring, *Welfare Work in Mill Villages*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1929. Information on family income and living standards is found in Rhyne, *op. cit.*; *Reports of the Immigration Commission, op. cit.*; *Report on Condition of Women and Child Wage-Earners in the United States, op. cit.*, Vol. XVI, *Family Budgets of Typical Cotton-Mill Workers*; and National Industrial Conference Board, *The Cost of Living Among Wage Earners*, Research Report #22, November, 1919, Research Report #24, December, 1919, Special Report #8, May, 1920.

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The primary sources of information on wages and hours in the industry are the bulletins which are published periodically by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics—those pertaining to the present century are numbered 446, 492, 539, and 663. Month-by-month information is carried in the *Labor Information Bulletin*, published by the same agency. Summary data from 1890 to 1926, which also carries a comparison of wages and hours in cotton manufacturing with other industries, is found in Paul H. Douglas, *Real Wages in the United States, 1890-1926*, Houghton Mifflin Co., New York and Boston, 1930. A similar comparison for more recent years is available in U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Hours and Earnings in the United States, 1932-1940*, Bulletin No. 697, Washing-

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only the I.W.W. has been subjected to full-length treatment, in Paul F. Brissenden, *The I.W.W.—A Study in American Syndicalism*, Longmans, Green & Co., New York, 1919; and John S. Gambs, *The Decline of the I.W.W.*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1932. Information on all the unions since 1935 must be drawn from the convention proceedings of the individual unions. Additional sources for the U.T.W.-A.F. of L. and the T.W.U.A.-C.I.O. are their papers—the former publishing the *Textile Worker*, and the latter *Textile Labor*. The T.W.U.A. has also published a good account of the formation and development of the T.W.O.C. in *Building a Union of Textile Workers*, 1939.

# APPENDIX

## TABLES

TABLE I

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE COTTON GOODS INDUSTRY, 1899-1939

Year	Estab- lish- ments	Wage earners	Spindles*	Wages \$	Value of product \$	Value added by manufac- ture \$
1899	973	297,929	19,008,352	85,126,310	332,806,156	175,738,174
1904	1077	310,458	23,155,613	94,377,696	442,151,218	160,403,570
1909	1208	371,182	27,919,711	129,789,717	615,217,702	251,204,198
1914	1179	379,366	31,545,951	146,129,628	676,569,115	244,966,575
1919	1288	430,966	34,331,357	355,474,937	2,125,272,193	847,486,596
1921	1328	412,058	36,618,000	328,226,744	1,278,220,831	570,778,734
1923	1375	471,503	37,408,000	396,602,644	1,901,125,703	753,753,488
1925	1366	445,184	37,928,000	353,382,870	1,714,367,787	637,215,173
1927	1347	467,596	36,695,000	380,909,543	1,567,400,612	695,808,711
1929	1281	424,916	34,819,000	324,289,094	1,524,177,087	626,148,110
1931	1140	329,962	32,673,000	219,680,268	805,792,347	400,937,105
1933	1057	379,445	30,892,000	216,384,000	861,170,000	384,401,000
1935	1042	369,062	30,093,000	236,338,834	983,572,399	381,415,118
1937	1072	422,310	26,982,000	312,488,675	1,227,713,471	546,673,593
1939	1085	395,999	25,261,000	280,760,012	1,119,670,880	547,216,963

\* Beginning in 1921, these figures are for the crop year, which ends on July 31st of the given calendar year.

Sources: *Census of Manufactures*, 1905, Part III, p. 26, 1914, Vol. II, pp. 36, 38, 1931, p. 225, 1933, p. 152, 1935, separate report, No. 9, p. 3, 1937, Part I, pp. 283-5, 299; *1900 Census*, Vol. IX, p. 45, *1910 Census*, Vol. X, pp. 55, 57; *1920 Census*, Vol. X, pp. 176-7; *1930 Census, Manufactures*, Vol. II, p. 247; *1940 Census, Manufactures*, special report, *Cotton Manufactures*, p. 1; Cabinet Committee, *op. cit.*, p. 46; *Commerce Yearbook*, 1925, p. 430; *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, *op. cit.*, 1936, p. 785, 1938, p. 801; 1940, p. 860.

TABLE II

NATIONAL ORIGIN OF NEW ENGLAND COTTON MILL OPERATIVES  
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION IN 1900

Native parentage*.....	7.3
Canada (French)**.....	45.5
Ireland.....	19.0
Great Britain.....	13.0
Poland.....	5.1
Canada (English).....	2.3
Germany.....	2.3
Austria-Hungary.....	0.8
Scandinavia.....	0.5
Russia.....	0.4
Italy.....	0.4
Other.....	3.4
Total.....	100.0

\* Having both parents native-born.

\*\* Having both parents born in the specified country, or one parent native-born and one parent born in the specified country.

Source: 1900 Census, Special Reports, *Occupations*, Table 41.

TABLE III

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF NEW ENGLAND COTTON MILL WORKERS\*  
BY NATIVITY AND RACE, 1900-1930

	1900	1910	1920	1930
White:				
Native-born of native parents.....	7.1	6.4	8.2	} 52.3
Native-born of foreign or mixed parents.....	25.0	28.3	34.9	
Foreign-born.....	67.9	65.1	56.0	47.2
Negro.....	**	0.2	0.9	0.5
Total.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

\* This combines the Census classifications of "operatives" or "semiskilled operatives," and "laborers." In 1900, no data on laborers was available. In 1910, no data was available for female laborers in Virginia, Connecticut, and Maine. In 1930, there was no data for male laborers in Virginia and Connecticut, nor for female laborers in Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

\*\* Less than 1/10 of 1 per cent.

Sources: 1900 Census, Special Reports, *Occupations*, Table 41; 1910 Census, Vol. IV, p. 434 ff.; 1920 Census, Vol. IV, p. 874 ff.; 1930 Census, *Population*, Vol. IV, p. 118 ff.

TABLE IV  
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF SOUTHERN COTTON MILL WORKERS\*  
BY NATIVITY AND RACE, 1900-1930

	1900	1910	1920	1930
White:				
Native-born of native parents.....	97.7	94.7	91.5	} 94.4 **
Native-born of foreign or mixed parents.....	0.6	0.4	0.3	
Foreign-born.....	0.3	0.3	0.1	
Negro.....	1.4	4.6	8.1	5.6
Total.....	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

\* Same note as in *Appendix, Table III*

\*\* Less than 1/10 of 1 per cent.

Sources: Same as in *Appendix, Table III*.

TABLE V  
THE NEGRO IN SOUTHERN COTTON MILLS, 1910-1930

	1910*	1920	1930**
Percentage of Negroes to total work force..	4.6	8.1	5.6
Percentage of Negroes to mill laborers.....	23.9	26.0	27.5
Percentage of Negro laborers to total Negroes.....	79.7	87.0	82.5

\* Data on female laborers not available for Virginia.

\*\* Data on male laborers not available for Virginia.

Sources: 1910 Census, Vol. IV, p. 434 ff.; 1920 Census, Vol. IV, p. 874 ff.; 1930 Census, Population, Vol. IV, p. 118 ff.

TABLE VI

THE COTTON MILL LABOR FORCE  
PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN,  
BY REGIONS, 1899-1930

Year	Men over 16 years			Women over 16 years			Children under 16 years		
	New England	South	Both regions	New England	South	Both regions	New England	South	Both regions
1899	48.2	41.6	44.8	45.1	33.4	41.9	6.7	25.0	13.3
1904	49.0	45.5	46.9	45.0	31.6	40.2	6.0	22.9	12.9
1909	51.0	53.3	50.9	43.7	28.8	38.7	5.3	17.9	10.4
1914	53.0	55.9	53.9	43.3	29.1	37.6	3.7	15.0	8.5
1919	51.7	59.1	55.6	43.3	36.0	39.7	5.0	4.9	4.7
1930	51.9	57.7	55.4	46.5	38.5	41.6	1.6	3.8	3.0

Sources: *Census of Manufactures*, 1905, Part III, p. 29, 1914, Vol. II, pp. 23, 48; *1900 Census*, Vol. IX, pp. 13, 32; *1910 Census*, Vol. VIII, pp. 254, 690; *1920 Census*, Vol. X, pp. 159, 161; *1930 Census, Population*, Vol. IV, p. 110 ff.; Vol. V, pp. 124-6, 353-5.

TABLE VII

MARITAL STATUS OF FEMALE COTTON MILL OPERATIVES,\*  
BY REGIONS, 1907/8 TO 1930  
(In percentages)

	Married	Single	Other**	Total
<i>New England</i>				
1908.....	29.6	65.9	4.5	100.0
1920.....	36.0	64.0		100.0
1930.....	41.0	52.0	7.0	100.0
<i>South:</i>				
1907/8.....	28.3	65.7	6.0	100.0
1920.....	37.3	62.7		100.0
1930.....	45.2	44.0	10.8	100.0
<i>Both Regions</i>				
1907/8.....	29.0	65.7	5.3	100.0
1920.....	36.5	63.5		100.0
1930.....	43.7	46.9	9.4	100.0

\* Sixteen years old and over in 1907/8, and 15 years old and over in 1920 and 1930.

\*\* Widowed, divorced, separated, etc.

Sources: Senate Document 645, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 131-2; *1920 Census*, Vol. IV, p. 749 ff.; *1930 Census, Population*, Vol. IV, p. 125 ff.



TABLE VIII  
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF COTTON MILL OPERATIVES  
UNDER 16 YEARS OF AGE,  
BY REGIONS, 1900-1930

	1900	1910	1920	1930
<i>New England</i>				
Number.....	13,450	10,283	8,394	1,273
Per cent.....	10.2	6.9	5.5	1.4
<i>South</i>				
Number.....	25,338	22,152	7,382	6,855
Per cent.....	29.6	22.5	6.2	3.7

*Note:* The figures in this table differ slightly from those in Appendix, Table VI, because Table VI covers all wage earners while this table covers operatives only and excludes laborers and loomfixers. Children are not important in the two classes which are excluded from the coverage of this table.

*Sources:* 1900 Census, Special Reports, *Occupations*, Table 41; 1910 Census Vol. IV, p. 434 ff.; 1920 Census, Vol. IV, pp. 519 ff. and 874 ff.; 1930 Census, *Population*, Vol. IV, pp. 118 ff. and 128 ff.

TABLE IX  
AGE DISTRIBUTION OF CHILD OPERATIVES IN COTTON MILLS,  
BY REGIONS, 1900-1930  
(In percentages)

	Age groups			Total
	10-13 years	14 years	15 years	
<i>New England</i>				
1900.....	16.3	34.0	49.7	100.0
1910.....	1.8	98.2	100.0	100.0
1920.....	1.2	36.9	61.9	100.0
1930.....	2.6	22.8	74.6	100.0
<i>South</i>				
1900.....	58.8	20.2	21.0	100.0
1910.....	42.1	57.9	100.0	100.0
1920.....	3.7	37.4	58.9	100.0
1930.....	2.0	28.7	69.3	100.0

*Sources:* 1900 Census, Special Reports, *Occupations*, pp. clxix-clxxxiv; 1910 Census, Vol. IV, p. 434 ff.; 1920 Census, Vol. IV, pp. 519 ff. and 874 ff.; 1930 Census, *Population*, Vol. IV, p. 128 ff.

TABLE X  
AVERAGE WEEKLY HOURS\* IN COTTON MANUFACTURING AND  
ALL MANUFACTURING, 1900-1940

Year	All manufacturing	Cotton manufacturing	Year	All manufacturing	Cotton manufacturing
1900	59.0	62.3	1918	53.6	56.0
1901	58.7	62.2	1919	52.3	53.9
1902	58.3	61.9	1920	51.0	51.8
1903	57.9	61.8	1921	50.7	52.3
1904	57.7	61.7	1922	51.2	52.8
1905	57.7	61.7	1923	51.0	52.9
1906	57.3	61.4	1924	50.4	53.0
1907	57.3	60.8	1925	50.3	53.2
1908	56.8	60.1	1926	50.3	53.3
1909	56.8	60.1	1932	38.2	44.5
1910	56.6	58.7	1933	37.8	41.4
1911	56.4	58.7	1934	34.5	33.2
1912	56.0	57.6	1935	36.5	34.6
1913	55.5	57.6	1936	39.1	37.5
1914	55.2	56.8	1937	38.6	36.2
1915	55.0	56.8	1938	35.5	33.7
1916	54.9	56.9	1939	37.6	36.7
1917	54.6	56.4	1940	38.1	36.0

\* Full-time weekly hours before 1932; actual weekly hours since 1932.

Sources: Douglas, *op. cit.*, pp. 114, 116; Bureau of Labor and Statistics, Bulletin No. 697, *op. cit.*, pp. 48, 84.

TABLE XI

HOURLY AND WEEKLY EARNINGS IN COTTON MANUFACTURING AND  
ALL MANUFACTURING, 1900-1940

Year	Hourly earnings		Weekly earnings*	
	Cotton manufacturing	All manufacturing	Cotton manufacturing	All manufacturing
1900	10.3¢	21.6¢	\$6.42	\$12.74
1901	10.4	21.9	6.47	12.86
1902	10.7	22.7	6.62	13.23
1903	11.1	23.6	6.86	13.66
1904	10.9	23.6	6.73	13.62
1905	11.1	23.9	6.85	13.79
1906	12.0	24.8	7.37	14.21
1907	13.5	25.7	8.21	14.73
1908	13.4	25.0	8.05	14.20
1909	13.0	25.2	7.81	14.31
1910	13.3	26.0	7.81	14.72
1911	13.5	26.3	7.92	14.83
1912	14.8	27.4	8.52	15.34
1913	14.9	28.5	8.58	15.82
1914	15.3	28.7	8.69	15.84
1915	15.8	28.7	8.97	15.79
1916	17.9	32.0	10.19	17.57
1917	21.3	36.4	12.01	19.87
1918	26.7	44.8	14.95	24.01
1919	33.8	52.9	18.22	27.67
1920	48.0	66.3	24.86	33.81
1921	35.0	60.7	18.31	30.77
1922	33.0	57.4	17.42	29.39
1923	37.1	62.0	19.63	31.62
1924	37.2	63.6	19.72	32.05
1925	35.0	64.5	18.62	32.44
1926	32.8	64.7	17.48	32.54
1932	23.9	45.8	10.85	17.86
1933	27.7	45.5	11.56	17.36
1934	37.8	54.1	12.58	18.93
1935	37.6	55.9	13.06	20.85
1936	36.8	56.4	13.79	22.60
1937	41.3	63.4	14.97	24.95
1938	39.6	63.9	13.35	22.70
1939	38.9	64.4	14.26	24.58
1940	41.2	67.0	14.85	26.11

\* Full-time weekly earnings before 1932; actual weekly earnings since 1932.

Sources: Douglas, *op. cit.*, pp. 101, 108, 124, 130; Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bulletin No. 697, *op. cit.*, pp. 48, 84.



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